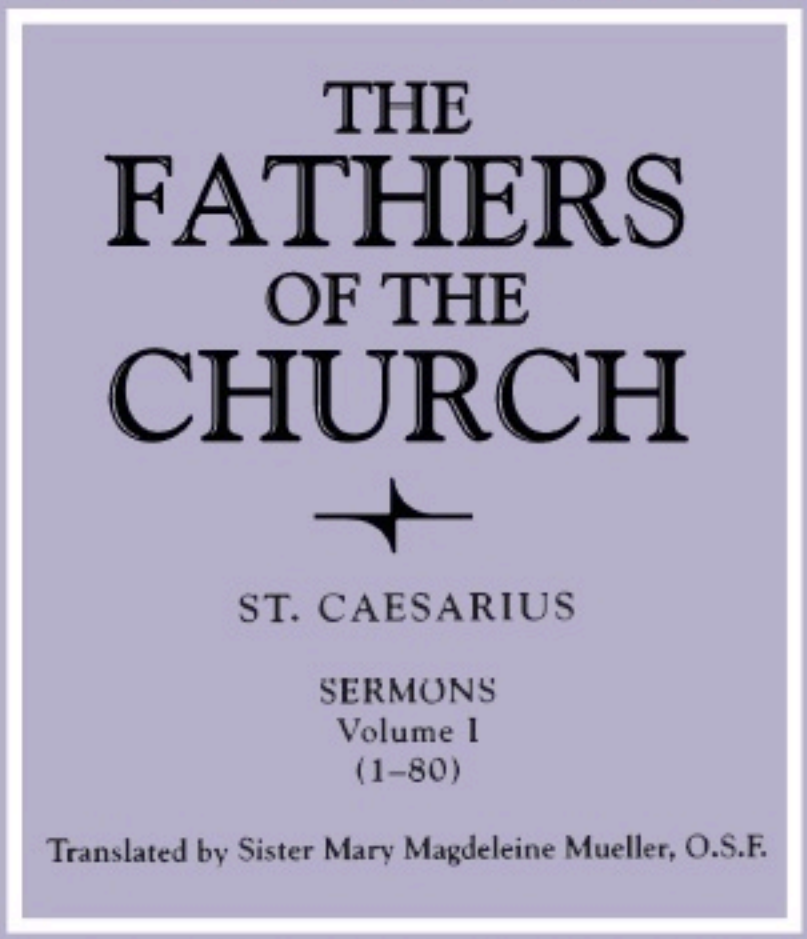
THE
FATHERS
OF THE
CHURCH
ST. CAESARIUS
SERMONS
Volume I
(1–80)
Translated by Sister Mary Magdeleine Mueller, O.S.F.

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH

A NEW TRANSLATION

VOLUME 31

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SERMONS

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(1-80)

Translated by

SISTER MARY MAGDELEINE MUELLER, O.S.F.

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INTRODUCTION

ADMINISTRATOR, THEOLOGIAN, PREACHER—any one and all of these titles may be applied simultaneously or in succession to St. Caesarius, Bishop of Arles in the first half of the sixth century. The life of Caesarius is known chiefly through a two-book biography written by contemporaries. Cyprian, Firminus, and Viventius, all bishops, wrote the first book, which describes the first years and early development of Caesarius, taking him into his episcopate. Messianus, a priest, and Stephanus, a deacon, continued the account, including details of Caesarius' manner of life and of his later years.

Caesarius was born about 470 in Burgundy, at Chalon-sur-Saône, the Cabillonum of Caesar's commentaries. His deeply Christian parents spiritually grounded him through the example of their own staunchly Catholic lives. Materially, they must have possessed at least moderate means, for at the age of seven Caesarius already was able to satisfy his compassion for the poor, often giving his own clothes to the needy he encountered.[1]

1 *Vita* 1.3 (ed. G. Morin, *Caesarii opera omnia*, 296-345). The *Vita* is also edited in Migne, *PL* 67.1001-1042, and in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, Scr. rer. Merov. 3.457-501 (ed. B. Krusch). A divergent section division in Migne will be indicated by a reference in the form, e.g., *Vita* 1.41 (22 *PL*).

Little more is known of the childhood and youth of Caesarius except that at the age of eighteen, without the knowledge of his parents and family, he approached Bishop Sylvester, begging for admission to the clergy.[2] His request was granted, and since the custom of clerics living in community was not adopted in Gaul until the following century, he doubtless continued to live at home except during the hours of duty.[3]

Filled with zeal and love of God, he resolved, after serving the Church for two years in Chalon, to become a stranger to both his native land and his family. Accompanied by a single servant, he fled to Lerins, seeking the life of the cloister. There he was received by Abbot Porcarius, and soon became throughly imbued with the principles and ideals of monastic life. During the ensuing years Caesarius gave an example of the true religious spirit—ever careful in observance, prompt in the performance of religious exercises, devout in labor, outstanding in humility, singular in the practice of charity.

Because of his capable performance of duties, Caesarius was appointed *cellerarius* of the monastery. Strict in the fulfillment of the duties of this office, he displayed tender care for the sick and aged, but maintained firmness in his dealings with the more vigorous members of the community. Some of the latter resented his rigidity in the distribution of material supplies and, finding themselves unable to sway him, prevailed upon the abbot to remove him. Finding thus an opportunity

2 *Ibid.* 1.4.

3 A. Malnory, *Saint Césaire* 3. For other complete biographical accounts, cf. C. F. Arnold, *Caesarius von Arelate* and M. Chaillan, *Saint Césaire*. The former is an extended treatment of the life of Caesarius, replete with details and voluminous background information; the latter is not so heavily weighted, and offers many descriptive passages and personal comments. Although now sixty years old, Malnory's biography of Caesarius continues to be the authoritative and, according to Dom Morin, 'still remains the best guide for anyone seeking a just idea of the personality of Caesarius, and of the part which he plays in the organization of the Gallo-Frankish Church' (*Revue Bénédictine,* 44 (1932), 8 n. 1).

to devote himself more assiduously to reading, mortification and prayer, he joyfully took advantage of it. So great was his zeal for self-mortification and the practice of virtue that soon, at the end of a happy stay in Lerins of five or six years, his physical strength became weakened and exhausted, and he was sent to Arles to recover his impaired health.[4] Here he heard the African rhetorician Pomerius advocate the reading of secular literature. At first he followed this advice, but, terrified in his sleep by the vision of a dragon biting him, Caesarius completely renounced 'the wicked wisdom of the world.' This renunciation and 'premature break with the study of literary models' was responsible, according to Malnory, for 'a certain lack of experience in the art of writing.'[5]

At this time, about 499, Eonius was Bishop of Arles. Having met Caesarius, the elderly prelate desired to welcome him into the ranks of his own clergy. Consequently, he applied to Porcarius for permission to do so, and soon had the pleasure of ordaining Caesarius deacon and then priest. After ordination, Caesarius was sent to reform a suburban monastery. Serving almost in the capacity of abbot, the saintly young priest, guided by the principles he had learned at Lerins, successfully directed the community for more than three years. Seeing in him an ideal successor, Bishop Eonius, toward the end of his life, summoned the clergy and people of Arles and sought their approval of his choice. Moreover, in accord with the Church policy of those times, he also secured ratification by the appropriate temporal authorities. Thus it happened that, at the death of Eonius, Caesarius was immediately appointed to succeed him. It is related that when it was time for his elevation to the episcopacy, the bishop-elect could not be found. Conforming to an almost mandatory precedent that emphasized the humility of persons called to

4 *Vita* 1.4-7,9.
5 Malnory, *op. cit.* 18.

the office of bishop, Caesarius simulated flight, and was found hidden in a cemetery.[6]

As Bishop of Arles (from 503), Caesarius is, in the words of Bardenhewer: 'a type of those active, self-sacrificing prelates of southern Gaul who, during the dissolution of the imperial power in the West, saved Christian civilization from total ruin, by grafting it upon the new political life of the barbarian conquerors. His episcopal city of Arles, where he lived and labored for forty years, was admirably adapted for such a mission, being the political meeting place of Ostrogoths and Visigoths, Franks and Burgundians. It was here in stirring times, alive with important social and religious problems, that Caesarius labored as a shepherd of souls, reformer of ecclesiastical discipline, and popular preacher of practical Christianity.'[7] After an abundantly fruitful career in the service of God and men, the bishop died, on August 27, 543.[8]

In addition to his preaching, Caesarius' activities as bishop may be considered, in general, as belonging either to administration or to the field of theology. As part of his administrative duties fell his relations with the temporal powers and with Rome, his unremitting care for the poor and for prisoners, the founding of a monastery for women, and various accomplishments effected through the councils over which he presided or which were dominated by his thought and personality. His contributions in the realm of theology, while neither so numerous nor so original, are still worthy of mention.

The episcopate of Caesarius was exercised under three political regimes: the Visigoth, under Alaric II, until 507; the Ostrogoth, under Theodoric, from 508 to 536; and the Frankish after 536. At the opening of the sixth century, Arles

6 *Vita* 1.10-14 (11f. *PL*); G. de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.186.
7 O. Bardenhewer, *Patrology* 611.
8 *Vita* 2.48 (34 *PL*). For 543 as the year of the death of Caesarius, see Malnory, *op. cit.* 282. Some other writers have preferred 542.

was dependent upon the Arian Visigoth princes, masters of southern Gaul, who looked on Caesarius with suspicion because of his Burgundian affinity. Forced to go to Bordeaux (505) in order to clear himself, Caesarius returned fully satisfied with the results of his visit. In the ensuing Ostrogoth government, Theodoric, likewise an Arian, brought the bishop to Ravenna on a false charge of treason in 513, but Caesarius went away covered with honors and in the possession of a number of valuable privileges for his see. With this welcome support Caesarius was able henceforth to convoke and preside over councils without hindrance.[9] In political matters he proclaimed always and everywhere that it was imperative to obey kings and temporal powers in their just prescriptions, but the false doctrine of the Arians he despised. It is only natural, then, that in the victory of the Frankish kingdom in 536 Caesarius hailed with joy the ascendancy of a Catholic prince.[10] If in reality he had appreciated for twenty years the liberalism of Theodoric, he knew only too well the Arian fanaticism of the Gothic military elements. The coming of Childebert was at least in this respect a guarantee and a consolation.[11]

The civil privilege of supremacy that metropolitan cities of the imperial provinces enjoyed over individual cities had been extended to the ecclesiastical domain. Consequently, from the beginning of his elevation to the episcopate, Caesarius, as metropolitan of Arles, was at the head of a province which contained twenty-seven bishoprics.[12] If he had shown himself a docile subject of the temporal powers in matters where his conscience allowed him to do so, he was no less an obedient servant of the Pope; and it was at the latter's

9 F. Cayré, *Manual of Patrology* II 200.
10 *Vita* 1.23 (17 *PL*); 2.45 (32 *PL*).
11 On the attitude of Caesarius toward the respective governments of Theodoric and Childebert cf. G. Bardy, 'L'attitude politique de saint Césaire d'Arles,' *Revue d'histoire de l'église de France*, 33 (1947), 241-256, and de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.193.
12 Chaillan, *op. cit.* 59, 63.

request that, after release from the custody of Theodoric in Ravenna, in 514, Caesarius journeyed to Rome.[13] Among several privileges he obtained there from Pope Symmachus, perhaps the most important was the restoration of Arles to the primacy of Gaul. This prerogative essentially consisted in a general supervision of ecclesiastical affairs in Gaul and Spain, the convocation of councils, and the right to deliver sealed credentials to the clergy and bishops going from these countries to the Pope.[14]

Additional honors were conferred by Pope Symmachus.[15] To Caesarius was granted the rare privilege of wearing the pallium, the insignia of archbishops in our day, but then the special insignia reserved for Popes. To this distinction the Pope added, for the deacons of the Church at Arles, that of being able to wear the dalmatic, as the deacons at Rome were privileged to do.

One of the primary concerns of the bishop was care for the poor and the prisoners in his diocese. As a result of repeated barbarian conflicts, devastation and misery prevailed. In these victims of war the pastoral zeal of Caesarius found a fertile field for the exercise of his abundant charity.[16] As early as the days of Alaric II, Caesarius had profited by his friendly relations with the governing power to obtain money for the ransom of captives. Subsequently, during the reign of Theodoric, the redemption of prisoners was again one of the acts of mercy he assiduously practised. Finding the resources of his see insufficient for their needs, Caesarius used even the treasures of the Church to help prisoners and to feed and clothe the poor. Chalices, patens, chandeliers and church ornaments of various kinds were used for this purpose, while his personal larder was emptied to feed the hungry. Housing, too, was a problem; the ex-captives were so nu-

13 *Vita* 1.38 (27 *PL*).
14 P. Lejay, *DTC* 2.2.2169.
15 *Vita* 1.42 (30 *PL*).
16 *Vita* 1.20 (15 *PL*); 1.32 (23 *PL*).

merous that even the episcopal dwelling was used to house them. Catholics, non-Catholics, Christians, and non-Christians were all treated alike; no distinction in creed or observance was made among those who received these benefits. Finally, the temporal powers, impressed by his example of universal charity, gave Caesarius appreciable assistance for this work as a token of royal gratitude.[17]

Moreover, when he was summoned to Ravenna in 513 on a second false charge of treason, Caesarius so impressed the reigning Theodoric that the latter not only unconditionally released him, but also dowered him with costly silver. Mindful of his poor and suffering people, Caesarius sold the silver, using the purchase price to ransom captives and relieve the distressed. In admiration and wonder at this unprecedented generosity, the king publicly lauded the bishop's self-sacrificing goodness, thus prompting many wealthy senators and influential men to help in the charitable enterprise.[18] The needs and wants of his flock, especially those most in need of material or spiritual assistance, were ever a primary concern of the zealous pastor and pontiff.

An important innovation at Arles was the construction of a monastery for women, no easy task, as Chaillan makes clear: 'Difficult and perilous was the creation of monastic centers for women at this time; all the more did the man of God persevere in this work. It was necessary to flee from the solitude of the mountains, to foresee an invasion of barbarians, to guard against the gross passions of the peasants, to help with the expenses of maintenance. . . . Men could organize their own resources, defend themselves, earn their daily bread by cultivating the earth; but women had to look for protectors in order to group themselves in communities.'[19]

The monastery of St. John, founded by Caesarius about the year 510, knew many trials in its beginnings, and it was not

17 Malnory, *op. cit.* 97.
18 *Vita* 1.37-38 (26-27 *PL*).
19 Chaillan, *op. cit.* 209.

solidly established until almost the year 524. It was one of the first monasteries for women mentioned in the authentic documents of Gaul, and apparently the very first in the city of Arles. Ruined before its completion by ravaging Franks and Burgundians, the monastery, which in fact was originally located outside the city, had to be rebuilt later in more peaceful times. Another monastery was built next to the metropolitan church, intended to serve as a refuge in case of future wars. The suburban convent was completed in 513, under the title of St. John, but the name was later changed to that of its founder. Even before the death of Caesarius the convent was transferred to the city.[20]

In the realm of ecclesiastical legislation, Caesarius exercised a preponderating influence in the decisions of the Councils of Agde (506), Arles (524), Carpentras (527), Orange and Vaison (529), and Marseilles (533). These councils were convoked or presided over by Caesarius as bishop, and, while their Acts are not, strictly speaking, to be considered his own work, the canons issuing from them were formulated by him or, at least, published under his revision or direction.

While the other councils treated the organization and government of the churches and the life of the clergy, the Council of Orange was concerned with a dogmatic question and was the most important of all. Its canons were officially approved by Pope Boniface (531) and thus received the force of law in the universal Church. It is most memorable because one of its pronouncements on dogma has become a rule of faith. The council decided definitively the great quarrel over grace which had raged among Gallic theologians for over a century. Caesarius and others taught that 'nature and free-will, left to themselves, are incapable of accomplishing and even of beginning the supernatural work of salvation, and that God is the primary and necessary agent who creates

20 For the history of the monastery cf. C. Lambot, 'La règle,' *Revue Bénédictine*, 41 (1929), 334; *Vita* 1.28, 35 (20, 25 *PL*); Malnory, *op. cit.* 257-259.

in us the first desire of good and brings about its effective accomplishment.'[21]

The statutes of the Council of Agde (506), the first to be influenced by Caesarius, chiefly concerned the clergy and only secondarily referred to the laity, 'considering, doubtless, that the faithful will be worth only as much as the clergy are.'[22] A definition of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was made, guaranteeing both clergy and laity against abuse of power by bishops, a situation due in large part to unworthy appointments and control by temporal powers.[23] Specific regulations for the clergy were made, particular insistence being given to the obligations of chastity. Age requirements for major orders were fixed, and candidates for admission to Holy Orders had to have familiarized themselves with both Old and New Testaments.[24] An important pronouncement referred to Church property and to its administration by ecclesiastics as stewards, not owners.[25] The prescription concerning the reception of Holy Communion was directed to the laity. A special canon was promulgated which charged anyone who did not receive Holy Communion at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost with apostasy. This seems to have been the starting point of subsequent legislation on this question.[26] It is with right that Morin hailed the work of the Council of Agde as the beginning of new times for the whole Church of Gaul.[27]

The Council of Arles was convoked for the dedication of a church. Special attention was paid to rural churches, for parish services had spread beyond the cities. Caesarius favored

21 J. Tixeront, *History of Dogmas* II 300; G. Bardy, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2.420-421.
22 Malnory, *op. cit.* 72.
23 For Caesarius and the political bearings of the Council of Agde, cf. E. F. Brunck, 'Caesarius of Arles and the Lex Romana Visigothorum,' *Studi in onore di Vincenzo Arangio-Ruiz* . . . (Naples [1953]), I 201-217.
24 Malnory, *op. cit.* 76, 79; cf. *Vita* 1.56 (43 *PL*).
25 Malnory, *op. cit.* 80-85.
26 Tixeront, *op. cit.* 370-371; cf. H. G. J. Beck, *Pastoral Care of Souls* 165.
27 Morin, *Caesarii opera omnia* II 36.

country parishes and chapels, but he ever insisted on an absolutely regular, priestly life for his curates.[28]

Legislation concerning the administration of parish revenues was the work of the Council of Carpentras. Here again can be observed the prudence and also the evangelical spirit of the great bishop.[29]

The Council of Vaison (529) established the manner of parish organization and control within the diocese. Schools were ordered for the training of young boys in ecclesiastical duties—a forerunner of present-day seminaries. Moreover, priests were charged with preaching in church, contrary to Roman usage, which made preaching the prerogative of bishops alone. In fact, it was directed that, if the priest could not perform this duty for some reason, sermons of the Fathers were to be read to the people by a deacon. Several liturgical innovations resulted from this council also: more frequent recitation of the *Kyrie eleison* at Mass and in the divine Office; the singing of the threefold *Sanctus,* not at public Masses only, but at all Masses; the addition of the *'sicut erat'* to the *Gloria Patri,* expressly in opposition to heretics; and the mention in church of the name of the Pope.[30] Other innovations in the sphere of liturgy owe their origin to Caesarius. The laity were encouraged to attend the daily recitation of Terce, Sext, and None as chanted by clerics in his basilica, and he even urged antiphonal recitation of the Office, providing for lay participation. For this purpose he prepared a kind of popular liturgical formulary.[31]

The last of the councils which knew the dominating influence of Caesarius was held at Marseilles in 533 to

28 Chaillan, *op. cit.* 155-156.

29 Morin, *Caesarii opera omnia* II 63.

30 *Ibid.* 85; for additional information on the right of priests to preach (*verbum faciendi potestas*), cf. Beck, *op. cit.* 267-271.

31 *Vita* 1.15, 19 (13, 15 *PL*). On Caesarius and the liturgy, cf de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.189; Lambot, *Dictionnaire de droit canonique* 3.274-277; K. Berg, *Die Werke des hl. Caesarius von Arles als liturgiegeschichtliche Quelle* (Diss., Rome 1946).

decide the case of a bishop who had given scandal. Subsequent councils were held at Auvergne (533), and at Orleans in 533, 538, and 541. These latter assemblies were not attended in person by the prelate of Arles because of illness and his advanced years.[32]

If, for all their importance, the canons of the councils guided by Caesarius are not to be considered as part of the bishop's literary output, we yet have, besides his sermons, a not inconsiderable body of other extant writings to mention here: several letters, his rules for religious, various *opuscula* pertaining to theology or Scripture, and finally a last will or testament.[33]

During the forty years of his episcopacy, Caesarius must have engaged in considerable correspondence, but only three of his letters have been preserved.[34] A very brief one, to Ruricius, Bishop of Limoges, complains of that prelate's absence from the Council of Agde. Longer are two letters addressed by Caesarius to his sister, Caesaria, and to the religious community at Arles over which she presided as abbess.[35] These compositions form a valuable supplement to the rule that the bishop composed for them. Certain administrative acts in epistolary or quasi-epistolary form have been handed down as annexes to the letters of other writers. In a letter addressed to Caesarius by Pope Symmachus in 513 the Pontiff renews the validity of certain regulations as Caesarius had requested

32 Malnory, *op. cit.* 163-164.

33 Dom Morin includes in his edition (II 33-96) the *Concilia a Caesario habita*, but those texts are not grouped with Caesarius' works by Dom E. Dekkers, *Clavis patrum latinorum* (= Sacris erudiri 3 [1951] 176-177). Morin's edition may now be taken to embrace the entire corpus of Caesarius' works, and calls for a revision of such lists as those in Lejay, *DTC* 2.2.2170-2171, and Bardy, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2.421-422; cf. de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.193-195, and Berg, *op. cit.* 6-9.

34 For the texts of the three letters cf. Morin, *Caesarii opera omnia* II 5-7, 129-144; of those to Symmachus, *ibid.* 10-14; to John II, *ibid.* 23-28; to Agroetius, *ibid.* 65-66. The letter on humility was later cast in sermon form; cf. Morin's *Sermo* 233. The letters of other writers addressed to Caesarius are in Morin II 3-32.

35 Cf. de Plinval, 'Césarie (Sainte),' *DHGE* 12.212-215.

him to do. The form in which Caesarius had put his requests (*postulata*) is preserved as an annex to the Pope's letter. A similar *exemplum libelli petitorii* is attached to another letter of Symmachus of the year 514. Vigorous declarations in the matter of the condemned Bishop of Riez, Contumeliosus, were appended by Caesarius to a letter of Pope John II in 534. A letter to Agroetius (Agricius), Bishop of Antibes, in connection with the Council of Carpentras, was issued by Caesarius and other bishops attending the council. Mention may also be made of a composition on humility, addressed to a group of monks, that is sometimes called a letter and did in fact originate as such. If his own letters reflect only a small part of his activity, there is a somewhat broader coverage in the fifteen or sixteen letters addressed to Caesarius by fellow bishops and by Popes (from Symmachus to Vigilius).

Among Caesarius' non-homiletic writings, his rules for religious, especially the one for virgins (begun in 512 and completed in 534), are of particular importance. In accord with his usual procedure, Caesarius adopted many portions of the rule of St. Augustine. Everywhere free use of the source is evident, sometimes in long extracts, but more often in short phrases and striking expressions. However, there is always simplification and clarification, in an endeavor to reach the intellectual level of those for whom he wrote.[36]

Two short treatises,[37] *On Grace* and *On the Mystery of the Holy Trinity,* were apologetic and propagandist, directed against the Arian heretics. The *De gratia* gives ample evidence of the mind and style of Caesarius, so there is no doubt about its authorship even though the doctrine explained is pre-emi-

36 Lambot, art. cit. 335. The rule for men is published by Dom Morin in *Caesarii opera omnia* II 149-155. Apart from his final text (*ibid.* 101-129), the Rule for Virgins, together with related writings, is conveniently read in Morin's earlier edition: *Florilegium Patristicum* 34 (Bonn 1933).

37 Morin, *ibid.* II 159-180; cf. his article in *Revue Bénédictine,* 46 (1934), 190-205.

nently that of Augustine. The *De mysterio sanctae Trinitatis* likewise bears the unmistakable impress of Caesarius, using the same style and arrangement of words which are found in other works of his. Similarly directed against heresy was the *Breviarium fidei adversus hereticos*. This could have been written by Caesarius, but there still is no conclusive evidence that it was. It was excerpted from works of Fulgentius, Pelagius, and others, but in some portions, especially at the end, the hand of Caesarius is clearly visible.[38] During the greatest part of his episcopate the city of Arles was subject to barbarians of Arian profession, so that the bishop realized the necessity of maintaining the Church's position. The *Expositio in Apocalypsim,* as the title implies, is a commentary on the Apocalypse of the New Testament. Some scholars have denied the work to Caesarius, but Morin reclaims it for him.[39] Brief mention should also be made of a canonical collection, the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua,* whose origin is still discussed.[40]

It might seem from this cursory view of the activities of the primate of Arles as administrator and theologian that these expressions of holy zeal might well comprehend all his labors. Yet, none of these reveals Caesarius at his best. It is as a preacher that he is most widely known and his worth most fittingly appraised. The sermons of Caesarius, long obscured or lost among the collections of other writers, give us the most adequate picture of Caesarius in all the fullness of his office.

Pre-eminently a pastor of souls, with nothing of the speculative in his temperament, Caesarius in his preaching affords moral inspiration rather than strict dogmatic prin-

38 Morin, *ibid.* II 181-208; also, his article in *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique,* 35 (1939), 35-53.

39 Morin, *ibid.* 210-277; cf. de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.194; also, Morin, article in *Revue Bénédictine,* 45 (1933), 43-61.

40 Arnold, *op. cit.* 8 n. 1, declared further research was needed; Malnory, *op. cit.* 50-62, decidedly claims it for Caesarius, while Dom Morin in *Revue Bénédictine,* 30 (1913), 334-342, says that it definitely does not belong to him.

ciples.[41] Most of his sermons were written for the average Christian, and they are remarkable for the numerous similes drawn from nature and the common daily life of his time. Exceedingly simple in style, they show no straining after rhetorical effect. They are the utterances of a man who is deeply concerned to make the sacred teachings penetrate the spirit. Caesarius never loses sight of those to whom he speaks. He enters into their habitual preoccupations, frequently drawing from them vivid illustrations. He knows the impatience and restlessness of his hearers; that is why he foregoes long and learned discourses and limits his sermons to a quarter of an hour. Moreover, he realizes that among his listeners the learned are few, and therefore he assumes the simple language of the majority, language clear and free from ornamentation.

'His only desire is to do good, and when he finds in one of his predecessors ideas or expressions capable of instructing and edifying his flock, he does not hesitate to use them.'[42] That is the reason why many of his sermons for many centuries lost their identity with him. St. Augustine in particular was adopted and adapted, but Caesarius also made use of other authors. The borrowed sermons are not always reproduced literally; the Bishop of Arles did not hesitate to change and revise them in order to suit them to the needs of his people. His plan in preaching was not at all complicated. There usually is an easy and familiar introduction, a short exposition which does not undertake to explain anything more than a few plain truths in a practical way, followed by a conclusion which summarizes the subject for the understanding or impresses its moral lesson upon the heart.

The subject matter of the sermons is wide and varied. Many of them deal with the principles of Christian morality,

41 J. Rivière, 'La doctrine de la Rédemption chez saint Césaire d'Arles,' *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique*, 44 (1944), 51.

42 Bardy, 'La prédication,' *Revue d'historie de l'église de France*, 29 (1943), 227.

the different classes of sinners, the principal vices of the day—in particular, adultery, concubinage, drunkenness, neglect of religious obligations, superstitious practices surviving from paganism. Some emphasize the different seasons and feasts of the liturgical year; others explain passages from the Old and New Testaments—normally, those passages that had been read in the liturgy for the day; and still others are directed to religious men and women.

Following the plan of the Latin text established by Dom Morin, the discourses in this translation are divided into five groups: sermons or admonitions on various topics, sermons on Scripture, seasonal sermons, sermons on the saints, and sermons to monks. The present volume comprises only the admonitions (1-80), placed first by Morin because they most unmistakably bear the impress of the bishop's character, and because the two principal early collections consist of very little else. A second volume will embrace the Scriptural discourses (81-186); and a third, the three last categories of sermons (187-238).

The doctrine or theology of Caesarius is not original. It embraces the ideas of his forerunners and contemporaries—Origen, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Faustus of Riez, Fulgentius, and others. He might have drawn the substance of his sermons from his own depths, but he rarely does so. Full of humble veneration for the Fathers in general, and for St. Augustine in particular, he considered it useless to emulate them, and without the least trace of literary pride he simply adapted to his own use the riches of other writers. 'There is a rusticity to his homilies and a disdain for secular learning which mark him as a man who cared little for the niceties of language. Yet strangely enough, sometime in his career, Caesarius is known to have taught the elements of Latin to the Milanese Abbot Florianus. It is this last apparent contradiction—of a prelate unconcerned with secular letters yet bothering to teach the fundamentals of a learned tongue—

which cautions the historian about dismissing as unlettered the south Gallic episcopate of the 6th century.'[43]

The sermons of Caesarius, which are the effective expression of his ministry, are valuable alike to the theologian, the historian, and the philologist. In them are carefully drawn the elements of belief and practice which characterized the Catholic Church in sixth-century Gaul; profuse illustrations and examples which would have been meaningful to his audience give a clear picture of the life and historical details of that era; and finally, his language—his Latinity—although little known, still deserves to be so. 'If Caesarius keeps himself to the old Roman tradition, we must realize also that, placed chronologically in the milieu which saw the European nations born, he began with them to speak something of their future language.'[44]

Not satisfied with preaching the word of God himself, Caesarius persistently enjoined the preaching office upon his fellow bishops and even his priests. However, it was becoming more and more difficult to find in the ranks of the clergy men instructed well enough to replace the bishop habitually in the ministry of preaching. In providing a substitute Caesarius showed respect for canonical legislation. He was careful to recall that simple deacons had the right to read the Gospel in church. Could not priests, then, all the more justly and even if they were not very well instructed, simply read to the people sermons drawn from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church? Thus it was that Caesarius caused to be formed collections of popular sermons, in part borrowed from other ecclesiastical writers and partly written by himself.[45]

The aims Caesarius set before himself in this matter and the methods he followed are best set forth by Dom Morin: '. . . the zeal of the holy bishop extended far beyond his own

43 Beck, *op. cit.* 13-14.
44 Morin, 'Quelques raretés philologiques,' *Archivum,* 11 (1936), 5.
45 Bardy, *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2.424.

episcopal city; he felt that the rural people especially had great need of the benefits of preaching. More than that, he gave thought to the other dioceses on this [the northern] side of the Alps, even the most distant, and he asked himself how he could bring even to these the indispensable nourishment of the word of God. Then he hit upon an original idea. Connected with his episcopal residence he had a sort of seminary where he educated some young clerics in the practice of ecclesiastical virtues and the study of the sacred sciences. Several of these disciples so distinguished themelves that eager disputes arose about securing them for vacant episcopal sees. With the help of these aspirants to the clerical career he set up within the shadow of the cathedral of St. Stephen a veritable library workshop, for the purpose of compiling as many collections of sermons as possible, to be broadcast in every direction. The more accomplished students were assigned the task of extracting from the writings of the Fathers, especially from St. Augustine, those passages best suited to the instruction of the people. Then the bishop would touch up this material, abridging the uselessly wordy passages and bringing light into the obscure ones, so that there remained only what was practical and intelligible to all. After that he would add a preface and a peroration in his own style, generally very short. Sometimes he would even insert some products of "his own small self," as he put it, and those assuredly were the best of all. Then he would make up collections of fifteen, twenty or fifty sermons, or even more. . . .

'We still have some of the prefaces or "humble suggestions," to use his favorite expression, which Caesarius placed at the beginning of his collections; they have a singularly delightful flavor. Therein the holy bishop implored everyone into whose hands these books should come, not only to read them themselves but to pass them on to others, to transcribe them onto parchment and, if they could, in better writing, instead of

keeping them jealously locked up in their bookcases because of their lovely bindings. . . . Finally the good bishop begged his readers to be lenient with his copyists: they were only beginners and many mistakes of transcribing may have crept in. They would please be good enough to pardon these mistakes but at the same time be careful to correct them according to new copies which are to be made.

'As Caesarius was the pope's vicar in Gaul and in part of Spain, every bishop who went to Rome had to pass through Arles and obtain from him letters of recommendation. He adroitly took advantage of this to force upon them one or more of his collections of homilies, demanding of them a promise to have them read in the church. If someone happened to object that it was not permitted to simple priests, and still less to deacons, to exercise the office of preaching, he had his answer all ready: "What!" he would say, "our holy ministers have the power of reading to the people the holy Gospels and writings of the Apostles, but they may not read the most beautiful passages from the holy Fathers or the writings of my own small self?" That is why, through a pious ruse, he did not hesitate to place at the head of his sermons, even of those which were really his own, the name of some Doctor or Father of the Church by whom he had been more or less inspired. And hence the great difficulty later on of discovering in the libraries the collections that are due to him; except for two or three they are almost never under his name. His language, however, is so characteristic that an expert will recognize it at first glance, even though only a few lines in the collection are by him.

'Thus it came about that collections transcribed through the labors of Caesarius spread almost immediately into Gaul, Spain and other cisalpine countries. In Spanish Tarragona they were put to good use as the so-called *Homilies of Toledo,* which were read at Mass in the Visigoth liturgy. In Great

Britain a number of them were soon translated into Anglo-Saxon. And it was with these collections that the great missionary bishops from the seventh to the ninth centuries, St. Owen, St. Eloi in Flanders, St. Pirmin in Suabia, St. Boniface in Germany, drew the barbarian nations to whom they brought the benefits of Christian civilization away from their pagan superstitions and led them, little by little, to the practice of evangelical morality.'[46]

To judge by the number and country of origin of the manuscripts that contain sermons of Caesarius, they must have enjoyed an exceptional vogue, first almost everywhere in central Europe, from the sixth to the twelfth century, then in ascetical milieux from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.[47] Such widely diffused writings did not long await printing. The *editio princeps* dates from 1508, and the sixteenth century alone brought forth four other editions. Those responsible for these early endeavors did not measure up to the ticklish problems of both higher and lower criticism involved in editing Caesarius, but the late seventeenth century saw a notable advance. In their edition of the sermons falsely attributed to St. Augustine (1683), the Benedictines of the Congregation of Saint-Maur, exhibiting their customary acu-

46 Morin, 'The Homilies,' *Orate Fratres*, 14 (1939-1940), 484-486. Cf. also *Vita* 1.55 (42-43 *PL*) and R. J. Deferrari, 'St. Augustine's Method of . . . Sermons,' *American Journal of Philology*, 43 (1922), 103. Collections of fifteen and fifty sermons are identified by Morin in *Revue Bénédictine*, 16 (1899). He explains there that the collection of fifteen 'Epistles of St. Augustine' are actually sermons of Caesarius; just as the bishop called the divine writings 'letters sent from the heavenly Father,' so these, too, were called 'epistles.' Moreover, 'the pseudo-Augustinian collection of the *Quinquaginta homiliae* was really formed by Caesarius, whose posthumous role in the moral and religious education of the European nations has not been appreciated until now for its true worth' (pp. 242-243). Cf. also his article, *ibid.*, 9 (1892), 52. For the subsequent influence of Caesarius, cf. Morin, 'Les éditions des sermons,' *Revue Bénédictine*, 43 (1931), 23; Malnory, *op. cit.* 242-244; Deferrari, art. cit., 103; de Plinval, *DHGE* 12.195.

47 Morin, 'Studia Caesariana,' *Revue Bénédictine*, 23 (1906), 371-372.

men, printed and correctly attributed more than a hundred of these misplaced works to Caesarius. Yet even this achievement fell far short of the edition of the sermons of Caesarius collected and submitted to recension in their own right that the situation required. It was not until almost 200 years after the completion of the Maurist effort that a project was set in foot that was to yield the long looked-for edition—that of Dom Germain Morin, O.S.B., printed at Maredsous, Belgium, in two volumes in 1937.[48]

The amount of work spent by Dom Morin on his edition of the sermons was enormous. As a beginning, he copied the text of sermons which the best critics had judged as authentic productions of Caesarius. Then he studied all the catalogues of manuscripts which he had at his disposal, noting those which bore the name of the bishop. However, this was far from satisfactory, and he found it necessary to search among the multitude of sermon manuscripts for collections which, under the most diverse identifications, or even without any indication of author at all, might have proceeded from the workroom of Arles. Collections of this sort could be met in almost all the libraries of any importance, and therefore it was necessary for Dom Morin to go in person through the principal deposits of Europe. Methodically and with patient perseverance he inspected all the documents connected with Western homiletics in the period from St. Augustine to St. Gregory the Great—an immense task which filled fifty years.

48 A third volume, containing the *Opera varia*, actually Volume II of the edition, appeared in 1942, just 1,400 years after the death of St. Caesarius. Just as Pope Pius XI fostered the publication of the earlier part of the edition, so his successor graciously supported the terminal phase of the work, granting financial aid both for the printing of 1942 and, when it all but perished in the war, for a reprint (1949). Dom Morin acknowledges that the suggestion to undertake the arduous task came from Rev. Dr. Thomas Bouquillon, then a guest at Maredsous, and later on the faculty of The Catholic University of America.

Dom Morin indicated the degrees of originality in the sermons by an elaborate methodology in the Latin edition. (1) Sermons that are almost wholly the work of Caesarius were printed in fullsize type; (2) those which show a minimum of Caesarius' own work (such as an exordium or closing formula) were distinguished by being printed in type of reduced size; (3) those borrowed from other sources, but exhibiting the style and thought of Caesarius to an appreciable extent, were printed in regular type, but set off by a dagger (†). In this edition, sermons of the last two classifications are distinguished by an asterisk (*).[49] Not included in the present edition are those sermons which once were accepted as Caesarian, but have been rejected by Dom Morin.

Any study of the Biblical text reflected in the sermons of Caesarius should now be made against the material assembled at the Abbey of Beuron for the edition of the Vetus Latina and now published for the book of *Genesis*.[50] Earlier studies have already shown that Caesarius is sometimes a witness to non-Vulgate text and to one of the older psalters as against the Gallican.[51] The Bibical text actually adopted by Caesarius sometimes precludes the use, in translation, of any standard English version. Where possible, however, and in conformity with the general policy of the series, Challoner's revision of the Douay edition of the Old Testament (except in *Genesis*) has been followed; for *Genesis* and for all the New Testament, the version issued by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has been adhered to so far as possible.

49 These are Sermons 3, 9, 11, 20, 21, 62, and 63 (set in small type in Morin's edition), and Nos. 10, 18, 24, 28, 58, and 70 (which he distinguished by a prefixed dagger).

50 Freiburg im Br. 1951-1954 (four fascicules); a preliminary fascicule (1949) listed the *sigla* employed in the edition for manuscripts and authors.

51 Cf. Lejay, 'La règle,' *Revue Biblique*, 4 (1895), 607; Morin, art. cit., *Revue Bénédictine*, 16 (1899), 293.

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SAINT CAESARIUS OF ARLES

SERMONS OR ADMONITIONS ON VARIOUS TOPICS

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Sermon 1

The Humble Advice of a Sinner Addressed in General to All Saints and Priests[1]

IF AS A CAREFUL EXAMINER I were to pay attention to my sinful negligences and my simplicity or ignorance, perhaps I would scarcely dare urge something good to simple people in parishes, because of that Scriptural writing which says: 'First cast out the beam from thy own eye . . .' and 'he who teaches another does not teach himself.'[2] Although these words terrify me exceedingly, something still greater was said: 'Thou wicked servant, why didst thou not entrust my money with the money-changers in a bank, so that I on my return might have gotten it with interest?'[3] When I reflect on these facts I fear that perhaps I will be guilty of a double crime, if I neither advise you nor fulfill them in deed. Therefore, as an unprofitable merchant, with

1 This is the longest and most serious of the sermons, with Caesarius indicating to his fellow bishops what they should do and preach. It is highly probable that this appeal was never spoken, but passed from diocese to diocese as a kind of circular letter. Cf. A. d'Alès, 'Les "Sermones" de saint Césaire d'Arles,' *Recherches de science religieuse*, 28 (1938) 335 n. 1.

2 Matt. 7.5; Rom. 2.21.

3 Cf. Luke 19.22,23.

all humility and reverence I presume to offer you, as capable and efficient traders of Christ, pearls of the Lord. These pearls, moreover, this idle, strange, ignorant, lazy, stupid individual could not use to his own profit, due to sloth. Thus, when the Lord repays and gives you an unfading crown for making huge profits, may remission of sins be granted to me through your intercession.

(2) With this preliminary greeting I suggest with all humility what is worthily due to your holiness. I adjure you by God whom you serve without sin, that you may forgive my presumption which comes to you through God's goodness with true humility and perfect charity toward you, and accept my entreaties with the kindly spirit God has conferred upon you. In this extended sermon I do not dare speak as a master teaching his pupils, as a swift man advising a slow one, but with charity as an inferior to a superior who may be simple and ignorant. But I pray that you will be eager to accomplish still greater things, over and above what we believe you have already accomplished through the goodness of God. By your pious teaching for the salvation of souls preserve and increase the useful and necessary custom of a daily Scripture reading at your holy banquet and when preaching the word in church. If this custom does not already exist, under Christ's inspiration may it be begun through your holy zeal.

(3) If we consider with a devout and attentive heart the grave responsibility and immense burden which weighs down the shoulders of all priests, what the Lord especially warns through the Prophet is not a light matter. 'Cry, cease not,' He says to priests, 'lift up thy voice like a trumpet,'[4] and: 'if thou give warning to the wicked of his wickedness, thou hast delivered thy soul. . . . But if thou declare it not to him, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require his blood at thy hand';[5] while the Apostle says: 'remember

4 Isa. 58.1.
5 Ezech. 3.19,18.

that for three years night and day I did not cease with tears to admonish every one of you.'[6] Who would not consider these words with great fear, if in order to absolve himself in God's sight this very Apostle both day and night preached the Lord's word to the people entrusted to his care, while we neglect to minister to the Lord's sheep the salt of truth? Fearing this, the Apostle adds the following words: 'I am innocent of the blood of all.'[7] Of what blood did the Apostle say he was innocent? Of none other than that about which the Prophet addresses these terrible words to us: 'If thou declare not to the wicked his iniquity, I will require his blood at thy hand,'[8]—the blood of souls, of course, not of bodies. Finally, the Apostle added the saying: 'I am innocent of the blood of all.' As though he were asked of what blood he was innocent, he adds: 'I have not shrunk from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.'[9] Therefore, like a spiritual, heavenly trumpet he declares to his disciple with great solicitude, saying: 'I charge thee, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead by his coming and by his kingdom.' Now, as if you were asking why he uttered such a dreadful request, he continues to say: 'Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season.'[10] What does 'in season, out of season' mean, except in season for those who are willing, out of season for the unwilling? Truth must be given to those who wish it, and must be pressed upon those who do not.

(4) I mention this because we ought to fear lest some of our sons may stand against us on the day of judgment, saying that they were not forbidden the unlawful or summoned by us to the lawful. The Apostle says elsewhere: 'Be diligent in reading, in exhortation and in teaching'; 'work

6 Acts 20.31.
7 Acts 20.26.
8 Ezech. 3.18.
9 Acts 20.26,27.
10 2 Tim. 4.1,2.

as a preacher of the gospel.' Moreover, he exclaims in an awesome manner: 'No one serving as God's soldier entangles himself in worldly affairs, that he may please him whose approval he has secured.'[11] Therefore, respecting the words, 'The burdens of the world have made them miserable,'[12] let us lessen our worldly obligations as much as we can if they cannot be cut off entirely. Thus we may continually devote ourselves to pious reading and be able to fulfill what our Lord advised blessed Peter when He said three times: 'Feed my sheep.'[13] Hence, bishops are said to be watchmen because they have been placed in a higher position, as if on the top of the citadel of the Church, and have been established on the altar, and so should be solicitous for the city and the field of God, that is, the entire Church, guarding not only the wide expanse of the gates, that is, by salutary preaching prohibiting serious sins, but also watching the rear doors and little rabbit-holes. In other words, they should continually advise the detection and cleansing of slight offenses which daily creep up, by means of fasting, alms, and prayer. Like most zealous cultivators of souls, from their higher position they should carefully inspect the Lord's vineyard in the manner of secular vine-dressers, and defend it from spiritual beasts or birds or any kind of savage, foul animals. Now, if it does not please us that our vine-dressers in the vineyard itself or out of it eat, drink, or sleep as much as they want, and do not guard the vineyard entrusted to them by keeping awake or defend it by condemning or frightening intruders, how, then, do we think we can please God if we do not strive with all solicitude by preaching, warning, and rebuking to defend the Lord's flock, the spiritual vineyard of souls, as we already said, from most wicked beasts and birds, that is, from the Devil and his angels?

11 I Tim. 4.13; 2 Tim. 4.5; 2.4.
12 The source of this quotation is unknown, but it occurs frequently in the sermons of Caesarius.
13 John 21.17.

(5) For this reason we ought to fear lest the harsh rebuke of the Prophet be addressed to us: 'Dumb dogs are not able to bark.'[14] By the barking of dogs and the shepherd's staff the fury of wolves is to be warded off. Now, it is certain that priests are not only ordained to be stewards of fields and cultivators of land, but also to exercise the spiritual cultivation of souls, that of which the Apostle surely spoke when he said: 'I have planted, Apollos watered.' Again he said: 'We are God's helpers, you are God's tillage.'[15] With great fear these facts ought to be considered by all the Lord's priests, who cannot be ignorant of the divine law and canonical regulations, according to what the Apostle says: 'If anyone belongs to the Lord, he knows what I say; but if anyone ignores this, he shall be ignored.'[16] For this reason, what the Lord says through the Prophet is to be feared exceedingly: 'Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge';[17] moreover: 'he that turneth away his ears from hearing the law of the Lord, his prayer shall be an abomination,;[18] 'the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge.'[19] Now, it is written concerning the garments of priests that when entering the temple they should have gold bells on the edge of their vestments. What else does this mean but that when entering the church all priests of the Lord should not stop shouting, that is, preaching about the last things, namely, the end of the world and the future judgment. By ceaselessly proclaiming the rewards of the just and the punishments of sinners, they may arouse the good to better things and recall the wicked from their sinful actions through fear of the future judgment.

(6) With this kind of cultivation bishops should always be occupied. Many are found who can plant in order or till

14 Isa. 56.10.
15 1 Cor. 3.6,9.
16 1 Cor. 14.37,38.
17 Isa. 5.13.
18 Prov. 28.9.

the fields, but few and rare are the people who can provide nourishment for souls. In fact, hardly anyone is found except priests of the Lord, upon whom this task is proved to have been enjoined by our Lord. This alone the priest should do by himself, for without him it cannot be done. If we really look we can find lay people and junior clerics capable of tilling the soil, working it, and exercising the cultivation which is necessary for land, so that we may continually strive to engage and devote ourselves to the duties for which we were ordained, fearing what was mentioned above: 'The burdens of the world have made them miserable.'

(7) Someone may say: Therefore are we not to be solicitous about the care of the churches? We ought to be solicitous for our earthly substance, but not excessively; we should so manage the earthly substance that its ordering cannot diminish or remove the care of souls. Perhaps at this point the reply will again be given: Those are foolish words; if I do not arrange my little land myself, I will suffer want and can give nothing to the poor, especially since I find no useful individual who can settle it in my stead. We allege this 'to make excuses in sins,'[20] and we say we cannot do what we are unwilling to perform. I am certain that before the tribunal of Christ this excuse will not be able to exonerate us. Finally, let less be gathered in the field; so important is it that more be gathered in the soul by love and instruction. However, someone may say: With what am I to give alms, if I am not personally solicitous for my land? Be solicitous by managing it for two or three hours, but not by constantly doing so, because of that secular but true sentence in which it is said: 'Our hearts do not admit two cares.'[21] Moreover, 'The man who loves what is not expedient will not love what is expedient,'[22] and the Lord in particular says in the Gospel:

19 Mal. 2.7.
20 Ps. 140.4.
21 Juvenal, *Satires* 7.65.
22 The origin of this quotation is unknown.

'no man can serve two masters.'[23] Therefore, it is to be believed that for this very reason in the Old Law priests and levites were not given possessions on earth, so that they might ceaselessly be engaged in teaching. However, since we cannot live without possessions, let us at least not be so involved in them that we cannot devote ourselves to the word of God.

(8) We cannot give very generous alms, you say. I ask your piety to consider carefully what I am suggesting. As you well know, there are two kinds of alms: one is to extend a mouthful to the hungry; the other is to give instruction to the ignorant. If you have abundant means to show material kindness, thanks be to God; but if you have not the means to feed the body, refresh souls with the word of God. It is especially befitting priests to give alms for the soul, that is, the food of doctrine. Should a priest, because of the nourishment of instruction, be able to give less bodily food or have none at all to give, a layman, a pagan, sometimes even a Jew or someone else will do so; but should the priest fail to give instruction, a layman would not dare to do so even if he possessed it. Now, although I am a negligent, weak sinner, I presume in my littleness and humility to be a guarantee to all priests that if, out of love for teaching they are continually engaged in reading and prayer, they will never lack the means of distributing material alms. The Lord promises this in the Gospel when He says: 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be given you besides.'[24] Therefore, let a man give spiritual goods, and let us see whether sufficient material goods will ever be wanting to him. Finally, let us hold Christ to the bond of His promise, for He has pledged what I mentioned above: 'Seek first . . .' If a man has both doctrine and material wealth, so that both kinds of almsgiving are possible for him, thanks be to God; but if he

23 Matt. 6.24.
24 Cf. Matt. 6.33.

has less material substance, the alms of souls, that is, spiritual instruction, is sufficient for him. Therefore, I beg you, and with great humility I add that whenever it is necessary to hurry out into the field, let us try not to stay there too long. Let us, rather, like good servants and useful farmers of Christ hasten to the spiritual field and heavenly vineyard, that is, to the city or church entrusted to us by God.

(9) Someone may say: I devote so much time and energy to physical labor because I want to give more generous alms to the poor. Now, I judge no man, yet I fear that perhaps it is rather presumption if some people seem to be busy with cultivating the land more in order to prepare banquets than to distribute alms. However, we who are most devout servants of the Lord should fear with all our strength lest that exceedingly harsh and dreadful sentence be addressed to us: 'Thou wicked servant, why didst thou not put my money in a bank, so that I on my return might have gotten it with interest?'[25] May the Lord avert from us what follows: 'As for the unprofitable servant, cast him forth into the darkness.'[26] Behold what kind of sentence will be spoken to those priests who refuse to preach.

(10) Therefore, in order that we may merit to be freed from the evil hearing and to be just in eternal memory, let us preach the word of God as much as we can, every Sunday at all times, as well as on the major feasts. Not only in church, but, as I mentioned above, even at a banquet we should have the sacred text read over again; in conversation, at an assembly, on the road, or wherever we are, let us hasten to reject idle gossip and biting jokes and to speak the word of the Lord to the hearts of the faithful. Thus, from good soil, we may merit to gather fruit a hundred-fold, sixty-fold, or thirty-fold, and from the field entrusted to our care there will not be thorns and tares tied together to be burned, but wheat

25 Luke 19.22,23.
26 Matt. 25.30.

will be gathered to be happily stored in the heavenly barn. Let us listen to what that unprofitable servant who was unwilling to double the talent he had received dared to reply at his lord's coming. He says: 'I hid thy talent in the earth.'[27] What does this mean, 'I hid it in the earth,' except that the word of God was suffocated by worldly occupations? Thus is fulfilled what we read: 'The earthly habitation presseth down the mind that museth upon many things.'[28] It is also to be feared that what is written in the Gospel concerning the thorns and the seed of the word may happen in us: 'The thorns grew up,' it says, that is, the cares of this world, 'and choked'[29] what was sown.

(11) However, most devout servants of the Lord, if we carefully heed the lessons which are read at the consecration of bishops, we have a means of arousing ourselves to the greatest compunction. What Gospel text is it, except the one I mentioned a little while ago? 'Peter, Peter,' it says, 'feed my sheep,' and again: 'feed my sheep.'[30] Did Christ say: Cultivate the vineyards by your presence, arrange the country estates yourself, exercise the cultivation of land? He did not say this, but 'Feed my sheep.' Now, what kind of a prophetic text is read at the consecration of a bishop? It is this: 'I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel.'[31] It did not say a steward of vineyards or country estates, or the manager of fields; doubtless, it is a watchman of souls.

(12) Perhaps someone will say: I am not eloquent, so I cannot explain anything concerning sacred Scripture. Even if this be true, God does not require of us what we are unable to do. So definite is it that this does not harm priests that, even if some possess worldly eloquence, there is no need of pontifical language, which scarcely reaches the understanding of even

27 Matt. 25.25.
28 Wisd. 9.15.
29 Matt. 13.7.
30 John 21.17.
31 Ezech. 3.17.

a few people. Can anyone not reveal or discuss with fitting eloquence obscure passages of the Old and New Testament, and sound the depths of sacred Scripture? Doubtless, if he will he can censure and reprove adulterers, he can admonish the proud. What presbyter is there, I will not say bishop, who cannot say to his people: Do not bear false witness, because it is written: 'A false witness shall not be unpunished';[32] do not lie, for we read: 'the mouth that belieth killeth the soul.'[33] Do not swear, as it is said: 'A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity';[34] do not envy one another, for it is written: 'by the envy of the devil death came into the world.'[35] Be not proud, because it is written: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble';[36] do not harbor hatred in your heart, for it is written: 'everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and walks in the darkness.'[37] Let no one with wicked daring and impious temerity force another man at his banquet to drink more than is proper, because it is written: 'drunkards will not possess the kingdom of God.'[38] Who is there unable to advise that no one should want to see or allow to come to his own feast or that of another dissolute singers, players, or magicians who are harmful to chastity and virtue? Moreover, since 'on these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets,'[39]—love of God and of neighbor—who is there unable to say: 'thou shalt love God' and 'thou shalt love thy neighbor';[40] besides, 'do not to another what you do not want done to you';[41] and: 'all things whatsoever you wish men to do to you, so

32 Prov. 19.5.
33 Wisd. 1.11.
34 Eccli. 23.12.
35 Wisd. 2.24.
36 James 4.6.
37 I John 3.15; 2.11.
38 I Cor. 6.10.
39 Matt. 22.40.
40 Matt. 22.37,39.
41 There is no Scriptural source for this quotation; it occurs again later in the sermons.

also do you to them'?[42] Now, all these truths and similar ones not only bishops of the Lord in cities but also presbyters and deacons in parishes can and should frequently preach. Furthermore, who is unable to say that no one should pay vows to a tree, observe omens, summon enchanters, or consult magicians and seers? No one should follow the wicked custom of the pagans and consider on what day he should set out on a journey or on what day he should return to his own home, for I fear that not only the laity but, what is worse, even some religious are overcome by this wicked practice. Who cannot say: Let no one slander another if he does not want to suffer the same things, for 'Whoever speaketh ill to his brother will be destroyed'?[43] No one should hang phylacteries, diabolical magic signs, or any kind of charms on himself or his property. Let no one try to crush a good case by accepting bribes. No woman should take potions for purposes of abortion, because she should not doubt that before the tribunal of Christ she will have to plead as many cases as the number of those she killed when already born or still conceived. Is anyone unable to warn that no woman should accept a potion to prevent conception or to condemn within herself the nature which God wanted to be fruitful? Indeed, she will be held guilty of as many murders as the number of those she might have conceived or borne, and unless suitable penance saves her she will be condemned to eternal death in hell. If a woman does not want to bear children she should enter upon a pious agreement with her husband, for only the abstinence of a Christian woman is chastity. Who is so simple that he cannot say: Come to church earlier, bring the offerings to be consecrated on the altar, visit the sick, welcome strangers, wash the feet of your guests, visit those who are in prison? Who is unable to advise that, as often as the sacred solemnities approach, chastity with one's own wife should be observed

42 Cf. Luke 6.31.
43 Cf. Prov. 20.13.

several days preceding, so that the altar of the Lord may be approached with an upright and pure conscience? Indeed, if a man communicates without chastity, he will receive judgment where he might have had a remedy. Who cannot testify that neither on the solemnities of the saints nor at any other time should a man get drunk or in a wicked fashion dare to sing shameful songs, dance, or pantomine devilishly? Who is there unable to advise against harboring hatred or anger against a neighbor or friend, because of what is written: 'He who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness,' and again: 'everyone who hates his brother is a murderer'?[44] Who cannot say that, according to the Lord's precept, tithes of all fruits and profits should be offered to the Church for distribution among the poor, and that each one should invite the poor and strangers to his banquet more frequently than the rich and dissolute? Virginity should be observed by boys and girls; the Creed and Lord's Prayer should be kept in mind by all Christians; moderation should be observed throughout Lent and to the end of Easter.

(13) I do not know whether there is any bishop, presbyter, or even a deacon who cannot preach in church or advise everywhere these truths and many others like them. No eloquence or great memory is sought here where a simple admonition in ordinary language is understood to be necessary. If anyone takes away our earthly substance, we presume to bring in the most powerful judges and scholars of rhetoric to intervene with the highest authority, so that we may be able to recover our material possessions from the usurper. And still we say that we are unable to admonish in common speech our exceedingly simple congregation! Why do we cry out for the land? Because we love the land. Why do we not shout in church? I have not dared to say it, but the truth compels me not to keep silent. We do not cry out thus in church because we do not love the people entrusted to our

44 1 John 2.11; 3.15.

care. For this reason I fear that in the midst of future punishment we will cry out without any remedy, if we are unwilling to shout with profit in church. If anyone passing by saw an animal of yours endangered by an attack of wolves and kept silence without offering any defense, I think you would blame him and say he is not your friend. However, we very frequently see the sheep of our Lord struck by the poison of envy, suffocated in the slough of dissipation, or immersed in the sewer of drunkenness, or guilty of any of the other crimes. Now, how will we stand in the Lord's sight if we do not shout or stop them, if we do not to the best of our ability strive to recall them from the pit of perdition and the abyss of vices by rebuke, punishment if necessary, or censure?

(14) For, regarding that which in many of us most frequently comes in opposition to the precepts of all the canons, what priest is there who cannot tell himself and admonish others with humility and with profit that no cleric should be ordained from among the laity unless his conversion shall have preceded several years or, at least, the space of one year? Moreover, no one who is married a second time, no public penitent, and no husband involved in a mixed marriage should receive the honor of the clerical office. Now, according to the holy Roman, Oriental, and African most salutary custom, it has been decided that no one should be ordained deacon or priest before the age of thirty. Still, is there anyone who cannot tell himself and others with charity that, according to the Council of Agde, in which, because of evil practices, a subdistinction was made, that no deacon may be ordained at least before the age of twenty-five?

(15) If, perchance, it is difficult for some of my lords the bishops themselves to preach, why should they not introduce the ancient custom of the saints which is still observed with profit today in parts of the Orient, whereby sermons are read in church for the salvation of souls? Are we perhaps to think that some of you might disdain even to enjoin this upon

your priests? May God not suffer us to believe this, since we should not even suspect it. We should rather believe that all priests are filled with holy zeal after the example of blessed Moses, and say with a clear conscience: 'Who would grant us that all the people might prophesy!'[45] I say in truth that, even if all the priests who could do this are lacking, it is not unsuitable or unbecoming for a deacon to be charged to read the sermons of the holy Fathers publicly in church. If any deacon is worthy to read what Christ said, he should not be considered unworthy to read what St. Hilary, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, or the rest of the Fathers preached. Do we strive always to give material alms ourselves, and still under God's inspiration not endeaver to dispense something of our own at least through others? If bodily alms are considered acceptable to God even when distributed through the hands of servants, alms of the soul also may doubtless be judged very pleasing to Him even if ministered to the people through the service of priests or deacons. As our Lord said: 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'[46] Now, if the Apostle said concerning both good and bad priests: 'Provided only that, whether of necessity or freely, Christ is being proclaimed,'[47] how much more so is this true if we cannot ourselves or should not through others serve the food of life to Christ's sheep? Indeed, if we do not endeavor to fulfill our obligation of preaching, either ourselves or through some of our brethren, it is to be feared that what the Lord threatens in terrible words through His Prophet may be fulfilled in us: 'I will send forth a famine into the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but a famine of hearing the word of God.'[48] Since, according to the testimony of the Gospel, we and our servants have received a measure of wheat that is to be

45 Num. 11.29.
46 Matt. 4.4.
47 Phil. 1.18.
48 Cf. Amos 8.11.

dispensed, what excuse will we be able to allege at the Lord's coming, then, if we have neglected to distribute what was entrusted to our care? We ought to fear that the souls of as many as have perished through a famine of the word of God due to our negligence will be required of our souls at the day of judgment. As the Prophet says: 'I will require his blood at thy hand.'[49] Now, if our holy Fathers of old with such great zeal and pious labor wrote innumerable volumes for the benefit of all the churches, how will we appear among or before them if we neglect to distribute to our children what we find has been compiled by them? If we have not the power to compose our own books, should we at any rate be slothful in this respect, that we do not ourselves or through our fellow servants make known in public for the salvation of souls what we find already written by the holy Fathers? I speak the truth to your piety; I am very much afraid that the sermons and countless volumes of the holy Fathers, which they composed with great effort and prepared for distribution by all priests, will be produced before the tribunal of the eternal Judge. If we cannot gather spiritual fruits through our own labor, it is just that we dispense with holy zeal and most fervent charity those which have been collected by others. Since the Lord threatens that, because of the sins of the people, 'I will cause it to rain upon one city and cause it not to rain upon another city',[50] we ought to strive with great care that we may not be that city upon which the rain of the word of God either does not come at all or, at least, only late and rarely. Without any doubt, if the dew or rain of the word of God is provided too late, the fruits of souls will be the same as earthly fruits which do not receive rain. So that you may understand it better, the divine word declares that the word of God is compared to dew and rain when it is said: 'Let my speech be awaited as the rain, and my words

49 Ezech. 3.18.
50 Amos 4.7.

as the dew.'[51] For, if all of us men wish to have refreshing waters in our gardens, and if there are no waters in them, we draw them from the sea with great effort, in order to provide vegetables for our bodies, how much more solicitous should we be for the Lord's garden, that is, the Church of God, that the dry places be watered and the hard softened by the rivers of sacred Scripture and the spiritual streams or fountains of the ancient Fathers, so that afterwards what is harmful may be uprooted and what is useful planted? According to the Apostle Paul, whose successors, although less capable, we are seen to be: 'I have planted, Apollos watered, but God has given the growth.'[52] Therefore, with God's help, let us do what belongs to us, let us continually plant and water; if we thus fulfill our duty, God will confer His favor.

(16) If we notice carefully, we will realize that what our Lord said to the blessed Apostles also refers to us: 'You are the light of the world,' He says, 'And no one lights a lamp and puts it under the measure, but upon the lamp-stand, so as to give light to all in the house.'[53] Now, if bodily eyes which are in the head refuse to show the way to the rest of the members, the whole body walks in darkness. Similarly, if priests, who seem to have the function of eyes in the body of Christ the Head, have been put upon a lamp-stand in the Church but are unwilling to shine in God's house and have ceased to show the light of doctrine to the whole Church, it is to be feared that some of the people may become involved in the darkness of error and fall into some abyss of sin. The fact that the Lord said His word is a lamp is not a trite utterance, for we read: 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet, O Lord.'[54] Now, profits of the present world are understood in the nature of a measure. Who, indeed, puts a lamp under

51 Deut. 32.2.
52 I Cor. 3.6.
53 Matt. 5.14,15.
54 Ps. 118.105.

a measure, except the person who darkens the light of doctrine with the profits of material advantages and fears to preach the truth lest he have less of the temporal possessions he desires? Thus, a man puts a lamp under a measure if he prefers material to spiritual gains.

(17) Who is ignorant of the fact that everyone has an interior and an exterior man? For this reason, whenever we invite people to a banquet it is proper for us to read over a divine lesson or strive to say something holy to sustain the soul, just as we arrange the service of food to refresh the body. For, since the soul ought to be the mistress and the body like her servant, it is not right for the maid to be satiated with many dainties even to the point of surfeit, while the mistress is not fed with the sweetness of the word of God. The man who endeavors both to offer souls divine reading and to give bodies a frugal, moderate banquet feeds both the interior and the exterior man. Thus is fulfilled, as was already mentioned above, what the Lord said in the Gospel: 'Not by bread alone does man live, but. . .'[55] I say this in fear, because I am certain that, just as the body dies without earthly food, so the soul dies without the word of God. What is worse, there are many who incur considerable expenses to prepare excessively costly, delightful feasts, thereby failing to give the soul what it needs by holy conversation and lacking the means of giving to the poor as generously as they should. At these banquets they not only refuse to offer sacred reading to feed the soul, but sometimes they are either busy with idle conversation, for which an account must be rendered on judgment day, or they do not fear and blush to say themselves or willingly to hear from others calumnies, buffoonery, or obscene talk. Is it not enough for an unhappy soul that it is not fed with the sweetness of the word of God, without in addition being inebriated with the deadly poison of vice? Lastly, even if the soul does not receive something

55 Matt. 4.4.

whereby to live, why should there be forced upon it the means of death?

(18) Therefore, with God's help we can and should observe these facts and always teach them to others. Our master Peter very clearly taught us what we ought to be and how we ought to act, when he ordained St. Clement. Since that writing is known to all priests throughout the world, it is not proper for us to quote it too long to your pious hearts. However, we thought a short passage from this letter should be inserted. If we are willing to listen carefully, doubtless we can find abundant means of devoting ourselves to God, of engaging in reading or teaching. Among other things there[56] blessed Peter said to St. Clement: 'You now should renounce all worldly preoccupations. Do not become involved in matters of worldly business; no longer pledge yourself as surety; do not become a legal advocate, for today Christ does not will to ordain you as a judge of secular matters. If you are choked with the cares of ordinary men you will have no time for the word of God or to distinguish good from evil in accord with the laws of truth.' A little farther on we read: 'Your piety is subject to reproach, if you neglect to study the word of God and take upon yourself worldly cares'; and again: 'if you are excessively preoccupied with worldly cares, you deceive both yourself and those who listen to you.'

(19) Pious souls of the Lord, what the Lord admonishes us is not to be considered merely in passing, for He says: 'Be holy because I am holy.'[57] Although this term properly belongs to all the Christian people, according to what blessed Peter says: 'You, however, are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,'[58] this term seems particularly to apply to all priests in a special way. In all the letters which are addressed to the Lord's priests by any men whatsoever, it is specially

56 Apocryphal letter of Clement to James.
57 Lev. 11.44.
58 1 Peter 2.9.

indicated that they are holy. Since, then, this term is applied to us, we ought to inquire what precisely is its meaning. It is only through Greek that the interpretation of this word 'holy' can be discovered. For *agios* is the Greek for 'holy,' and *agios* has the meaning 'not of the earth.'[59] Therefore, if we are more solicitous for heavenly things than for those of earth, this term is not unfittingly applied to us. However, if we seem to spend a greater part of our life in material activities than in sacred reading or spiritual instruction, I do not know whether we can calmly accept this term. So, in order that this holy name may not be applied to us unto judgment, let us with Christ's help endeavor to fulfill what the interpretation of the word means, so that we may be holy, that is, not earthly. Then will be fulfilled in us what the Apostle says: 'If you have risen with Christ . . . mind not the things that are on earth.'[60] Moreover, 'The Lord is near. Have no anxiety, but in every prayer and supplication,'[61] and again: 'I would have you free from care.'[62] If, in the words of the Apostle, this should continually be observed even by people in the world, with how great zeal, with how great diligence and fear should it be fulfilled by all priests? Indeed, many titles are fittingly applied to priests: we are called shepherds, pilots, and bishops. If we truly are shepherds, we ought to provide spiritual pastures for the Lord's flock. If we are pilots,

59 The translation of this sentence is based upon a reading found by Dom Lambot in an 11th-century Bordeaux manuscript (which he has prepared for *Corpus Christianorum*. The Bordeaux reading, clearly superior to the only manuscript reading known to Dom Morin (who recognized it to be faulty), runs as follows: 'Sanctus enim graece dicitur *agius*: *agius* interpretatur "non terremus." ' As R. M. Frank (in *Traditio,* 8 [1952] 387-389) discerned even from the faulty reading in Morin's text, Caesarius, possibly following Origen, is arguing from a popular etymology which sees the Greek *(h) ágios* made up of *a* ('not') and *gē* ('earth'). There is a similar etymology in St. Thomas Aquinas, *S. T.* II-II q. 81 a. 8.

60 Col. 3.1,2.

61 Phil. 4.5,6.

62 1 Cor. 7.32.

we should with God's help direct the ship of the Church in the midst of the waves of this life, vigorously and courageously, so that without any error we may be able to enter the port of paradise in a straight course, after all the waves and storms. Now, a bishop is interpreted as an inspector on a lofty site. Therefore, since we have been placed in a higher position, let us with the Lord's help and great diligence fulfill the obligations of our title and always be solicitous for the Lord's sheep, fearing what the Lord proclaims in dreadful words concerning priests and abbots: 'I will require my flock at the hand of the shepherds';[63] 'that which was broken you have not strengthened, neither have you sought that which was lost, and what was whole and healthy you have destroyed.'[64] Since we have been appointed by the Lord, as I already indicated above, to direct the ship of His Church, let us with His help and the direction of the two Testaments so govern the ship of His Church that we may not through some negligence turn aside either to the right or to the left, but may without effort keep a straight course of life in the midst of the great dangers of this world. Just as any ship cannot gather earthly profits without many labors, so the ship of the Church cannot obtain the gains and joy of the eternal fatherland without many tribulations. For, just as pilots of ships, if they fail to be alert because of an excessive desire for sleep or false sense of security and do not show the sailors what they should do, immediately suffer shipwreck, so unless the Church's pilots with all vigilance teach, terrify, sometimes even censure, and occasionally punish lightly, at times even threatening the day of judgment with severity, and thus show how to keep the straight path of eternal life, it is to be feared that they will receive judgment where they might have had a remedy. For this reason, with the inspiration and assistance of the Lord, let us endeavor as far as it lies in our power to inform by word and example the people entrusted to our care. Then,

63 Ezech. 34.10.
64 Cf. Ezech. 34.4.

when we come before the tribunal of the eternal Judge, we may merit to say with confidence: 'Behold, Lord, I and my children whom thou hast given me.'[65]

(20) Now, someone may say: I lack a memory, and have not the eloquence to preach the word of God. I am afraid, pious souls of the Lord, that perchance this excuse will not be able to protect us at that dreadful judgment. We know very well that by preference our Lord did not choose learned men or orators, but unlettered fishermen and shepherds, poor and obscure men, to preach the word of God. For this reason, even if a priest possesses fine-flowing worldly eloquence, as I already mentioned above, it is not at all proper if he wants to speak in church in such a way that his admonition cannot reach all of the Lord's flock, as it should, but only a few learned men. Therefore, all my priests of the Lord should preach to the people in simple, ordinary language which all the people can grasp, fulfilling what the Apostle says: 'I became all things to all men, that I might gain all.'[66] Moreover, according to the holy and salutary advice of St. Jerome: 'When a priest preaches he ought to arouse groans of compunction rather than applause.'[67] Your holiness should carefully notice, too, that not without great fear should we reflect and consider that in the Gospel we have deserved to be called 'the salt of the earth.'[68] Now, what should be understood as salt except the teaching of priests, and what as the earth but the people entrusted to them? Therefore, with God's help, we ought to labor as much as we can so that we may not, perchance, merit to be tasteless salt if—may the divine goodness not permit it!—we are excessively impeded by earthly occupations and take the salt of doctrine away from Christ's flock. Moreover, we should not consider without great fear that He did not say the unsavory salt should be thrown

65 Isa. 8.18.
66 1 Cor. 9.22.
67 Cf. Jerome, to Nepotian, Ep. 52 n. 8.
68 Matt. 5.13.

into the fields or gardens where sterile earth is accustomed to be made savory with decayed matter, but that it is good for no purpose and is to be thrown into the street to be trodden on by the feet of the unworthy. Almost similar to this idea is the one in which we read: 'If one man shall sin against another . . . he shall pray. . .'[69]

(21) However, I beseech you, and I adjure you by God whom you serve without sin, that you may forgive my presumption. I am certain that my exceedingly simple words can bring roughness to your learned ears, or even produce disgust. Yet, if anyone cares to listen to me willingly and patiently and will believe in the Trinity which is God, true and genuine, he will find the One who can repay eternal rewards for his pious consent and generous obedience. By suggesting these truths I am eager to absolve myself in the sight of God. However, I am certain that I will not have to endure any shame for mentioning them, before the tribunal of the eternal Judge where they will be testimony for both me and others. This advice and plea proceeds, indeed, from true humility and perfect charity.

Sermon 2

A Humble Suggestion or Salutary Admonition

I beg and exhort with great humility that whoever receives this little book in his hands should both read it frequently himself and instil it into others, as well as giving it to them to read and transcribe. Thus a man may receive a double reward from the Lord as a result of his own progress and that of others. I mention this fact, because many people, and perhaps pious ones, want to keep their numerous books shining and beautifully bound; they keep them locked up in chests,

69 1 Sam. 2.25.

so that they may not read them themselves or give them to others to read. They do not know that it is of no advantage to have books and not read them because of worldly hindrances. If a book is well covered and shining but not read, it does not make the soul bright; but one which is continually read, and because of the fact that it is often unrolled is not beautiful on the outside, makes a soul beautiful within.

Preface to the Book of Sermons

With the intuition of paternal devotion and the solicitude of any pastor we have written in this little book simple admonitions that are necessary for parishes. These the holy presbyters or deacons should read on the major feasts to the people entrusted to them. By taking care to do this with a kindly spirit, I have absolved my conscience in God's sight. If through negligence presbyters or deacons fail to read these sermons to the people, they should realize that they will plead their case with me before the tribunal of Christ, when both they and I will render an account to the eternal Judge for the flock committed to our care. Therefore, each year review this little book with all diligence, so that you may absolve yourself in the sight of both God and men. Now, it was necessary to make more books out of these simple admonitions; so, if they do not displease you, you can and should copy them in better handwriting and on parchment, according to your means. They may also be given to other parishes for transcription, so that you may receive a double reward as a result of the progress of others as well as your own. Moreover, because it is necesssary, and very much so, that not only the clergy but also the laity know the Catholic faith well, we have especially written what the holy Fathers have defined as the Catholic faith. This we should both read frequently ourselves and impress upon others. Now, since our secretaries are still be-

ginners, if you find anything in the writing or ideas more or less than is necessary, with charity be indulgent. Correct the text as it needs it, and bid it be copied in better handwriting.

*Sermon 3[1]

The Beginning of the Creed of St. Athanasius, Bishop

Whoever wants to be saved, brethren, above all must know and adhere to the Catholic faith. If anyone does not keep it whole and intact, doubtless he will perish forever. Moreover, this is the Catholic faith which we preach and believe. We adore one God in the Trinity, and the Trinity in unity. There is no confusion of persons nor a separation of substance, which is one in the Trinity. For the person of the Father is one, that of the Son another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. However, the divine nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal. As the Father is, so the Son and, likewise, the Holy Spirit. Uncreated is the Father, uncreated is the Son, uncreated is the Holy Spirit. Immeasurable is the Father, immeasurable is the Son, immeasurable is the Holy Spirit. Eternal is the Father, eternal is the Son, eternal is the Holy Spirit. Still, they are not three eternal beings, but one; similarly, they are not three uncreated, immeasurable beings, but one uncreated, immeasurable being. Likewise, omnipotent is the Father, omnipotent is the Son, omnipotent is the Holy Spirit; not three omnipotent gods, but one omnipotent God. So, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; yet, they are not three gods, but one God. In like manner, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord; yet, not

1 For sermons marked thus with an asterisk Caesarius drew, to varying extents, upon pre-existing works, according to Dom Morin; cf. Introduction, p. xxv.

three lords, but one Lord. Now, just as we are compelled by Christian truth to confess each Person singly God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Catholic religion to say three gods or lords. The Father was made or created or begotten by no one. The Son was begotten by the Father alone, not made or created. The Holy Spirit was not made or created or begotten, but proceeds from the Father and the Son. Therefore, there is one Father, not three Fathers; there is one Son, not three Sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. Moreover, in this Trinity there is nothing first or last, nothing greater or lesser, but all three Persons are co-eternal with each other, are co-equal. Thus, as was already said, in all things the Trinity in unity and unity in the Trinity must be adored. Anyone, then, who wishes to be saved must feel thus about the Trinity. Equally necessary is it for eternal life and everlasting salvation that each one faithfully believe in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Correct is our faith if we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally God and man. As God, He was begotten of the substance of the Father before the world, and as man He was born of the substance of His Mother in time. He is perfect God and perfect man, living with a rational soul and a human body. Equal to the Father in His divinity, He is less than the Father in His humanity. Although both God and man, Christ is one, not two. Moreover, He is not one by a changing of His divinity into flesh, but by the taking on of humanity in God. He is entirely one, not by a confusion of substance, but by unity of person. Indeed, just as a rational soul and a body are one man, so God and man are one Christ. The same person who suffered for our salvation descended into hell, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father. From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. At His coming all men must rise again with their bodies to render an account of their deeds. Those who have lived well will go into eternal life;

those who have done evil, into eternal fire. This is the Catholic faith: unless each one faithfully and firmly believes it he cannot be saved.

Sermon 4

How the Word of God Should Be Desired and Even Sought

(1) Among the other beatitudes which our Lord and Saviour deigned to mention in the Gospel He added this one, saying: 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.'[1] Blessed are those to whom God has been pleased to grant this remarkable hunger and desirable thirst. But how does one hunger after justice, brethren? We hunger after justice if we are willing to hear the word of God with patience and love, for of such food it has been said: 'They that eat me yet hunger: and they that drink me yet thirst.'[2] For, although action is better than the possession of knowledge, it is necessary to know before acting; one must know what he wishes to accomplish. Finally, listen to Scripture saying: 'Every one who does not learn justice on earth will not practice the truth,' and again: 'zeal will take hold of an ignorant people, and the adversary consume them like fire.' Now, in this passage fire is called an adversary because it is recognized as proceeding, not from Christ's side, but from that of the Devil. And again: 'Learn justice, you inhabitants of the earth.'[3] It is clear, then, that the man who wishes to learn justice hungers for it; therefore, we must first learn it, that afterwards we may fulfill it. In order that by God's grace this beatitude may be fulfilled in you, if, in truth,

1 Matt. 5.6.
2 Eccli. 24.29.
3 Cf. Isa. 26.10,11,9.

as we believe, you hunger and thirst after justice, as often as God's word is preached to you only at intervals, do not expect that we should instil it into you of our own accord. You yourselves should devoutly and eagerly demand it of us as something rightly your due.

(2) Now, if we were always willing to speak of our own accord and you refused to demand it of us when we sometimes delayed, perhaps we might be considered troublesome by those who do not know our danger. However, anyone who knows how heavy a weight hangs upon the neck of priests realizes that, even if we preach the word of the Lord continuously, we give less than is due. The Holy Spirit indeed bears witness to priests in the Prophet's words: 'Cry, cease not.' He did not say: Cry after a few days, but: 'Cry, cease not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their sins.'[4] And again: 'If thou declare not to the wicked his iniquity, I will require his blood at thy hand.'[5] The Apostle says: 'Remember that for three years night and day I did not cease with tears to admonish every one of you.'[6] If, in order to acquit himself in God's sight, the Apostle preached the word of God by day and by night, what will happen to us who scarcely provide spiritual pastures for the flock entrusted to us, even after many days? For this reason Paul gives the same evidence when he says: 'I charge thee, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead by his coming and by his kingdom.' And as if there were a question as to why he prefixed such a dreadful plea, he proceeds to add: 'Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke.'[7] What does 'in season, out of season' mean, except 'in season' for those who are willing, 'out of season' for those who are not? The word of God must be offered to those who are willing to listen; it must be forced upon those who are

4 Isa. 58.1.
5 Ezech. 3.18.
6 Acts 20.31.
7 2 Tim. 4.1,2.

averse to it. Otherwise, they might stand against us before the tribunal of Christ and say that they were not warned by us, and the blood of their souls be required at our hands. Therefore, we ought to consider with great fear and trembling and dread, lest that terrible sentence be directed to us which that servant who refused to double the talent he had received deserved to hear: 'Wicked and slothful servant! Why didst thou not put my money in a bank, so that I on my return might have gotten it with interest?' What followed? May God spare us this! 'As for the unprofitable servant,' He said, 'cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth.'[8] 'Why didst thou not put my money in a bank?' By the money, dearly beloved, is understood nothing else than what is preached in church. The bankers who ought to receive the money are none other than the Christian people. For, just as it will be a serious sin not to put our Lord's money on the counter of your heart, so, on the other hand, a not inconsiderable danger threatens each one of you who refuses to double by good deeds what he has received in word.

(3) Since, therefore, you realize both your and our danger, as often as it happens that you receive the word of God with some delay, bear it with difficulty just as if the substance of daily nourishment were taken from your body. Indeed, our bodily hunger should not be greater than that of the soul, for, the more worthy we consider our soul, the greater anxiety we should have for its nourishment. Now, if the body is refreshed twice a day, why should anyone think it troublesome or foolish if the word of God is preached to the soul every seven days? Just as the body is refreshed by earthly food, so also the soul is fed by the word of God. Therefore, as often as it is offered to you with some delay, by your holy importunity rouse our sluggishness and demand what is rightly your due.

(4) Now, in the Church priests seem to bear a likeness

8 Matt. 25.26,30; Luke 19.23.

to cows, while the Christian people fulfill the type of calves. Cows run about through the fields and meadows, go around the vineyards and olive gardens, to prepare the food of milk for their calves by eating grasses and leaves. In like manner, priests, by continually reading the word of God, ought to pluck flowers from the varied mountains of holy Scripture. As a result of this they will be able to offer spiritual milk to their children, so as to be able to have a part with the Apostle Paul, who said: 'I fed you with milk, not with solid food.'[9] Not unfittingly, dearly beloved, do priests seem to bear a likeness to cows. Just as a cow has two udders to nurse her calf, so also priests ought to feed the Christian people with the two udders of the Old and New Testaments. Moreover, consider, brethren, and see that not only do carnal cows come to their calves, but the calves also go to meet them. They strike the udders of their mother with their heads in such a way that, sometimes, if the calves are quite large, they seem to lift the bodies of their mothers up from the ground. However, the cows willingly accept this injury, for they desire to see the growth of their calves. Good priests, too, should devoutly desire and long for their sons to disturb them by continual questions concerning the salvation of their souls. While divine grace is bestowed upon the sons who are knocking, an eternal reward is prepared for the priests who reveal the secrets of holy Scripture. For this reason, then, I say that this likeness should be preserved both in us and in you. We always want to feel that desirable restlessness on your part, provided that we may deserve to see your souls grow in the love of Christ. Therefore, as it is expedient for us to prepare spiritual food by gathering the flowers of the Scriptures, so it is necessary for you to seek it with great eagerness. Just as calves go after the udders of their mothers with a strong attack in order to be able to draw the necessary food from

9 1 Cor. 3.2.

deep down in them, so also the Christian people should continually appeal to their priests, as the udders of holy Church, by devout questions. Thus they may acquire the food of salvation and provide for themselves the necessary nourishment of their souls. If, perchance, the priests are willing to offer it only haphazardly, and the people, occupied with too many distractions of this world, scorn to ask for it, may there not be fulfilled what was written: 'I will send forth a famine into the land: not a famine of bread, nor a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord.'[10] We believe that through God's mercy the desire of reading and preaching will mercifully be given to us, and to you the longing to listen. Thus may we be able to give a good account of our preaching before the tribunal of the eternal Judge. May you also, by your gentle obedience and perseverance in good works, deserve to arrive at eternal rewards, with the help of Him who lives and reigns.

Sermon 5

An Admonition That, for the Salvation of One's Soul, Harsh Preaching Not Only Should Not Be Rejected, But Should Even Be Sought with Ardent Longing

(1) As often as it is necessary for both your and my salvation that I preach some hard and harsh truths, dearly beloved, you ought to consider my danger and accept it with calmness and patience. Harsh preaching provides remedies for souls that are sick, and arranges adornments for the healthy. What the Holy Spirit threatens the Lord's priests through the Prophet is not a slight matter. 'If thou declare

10 Amos 8.11..

1 Ezech. 3.18.

not to the wicked his iniquity,' He says, 'I will require his blood at thy hand,'[1] and again: 'cry, cease not; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their sins.'[2] The negligent priest is further addressed in the terrible words of the Gospel: 'Wicked servant! Why didst thou not put my money in a bank, so that I on my return might have gotten it with interest?' Afterwards we read: 'As for the unprofitable servant, cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth.'[3] Behold the sentence a careless priest will endure, if he is unwilling to preach the word of God continually. For this reason, dearly beloved, I absolve my conscience in the sight of God as often as I mention with humility a few words for the salvation of your soul. Indeed, I fear and shudder at the example of Heli, the priest, for, when he heard that his sons were committing adultery, he pretended to kill them or to suspend them from communion, but only gently admonished them, saying: 'My sons, it is no good report that I hear about you. If one man shall sin against another, the priest will pray for him; but if the priest himself sin, who shall pray for him?'[4] Now, in spite of this admonition, he fell backwards from his stool and died of a broken neck, and his name was blotted out of the book of life, because he did not punish his sons with great severity. Moreover, on one day 30,000 persons were killed, including his two sons, and the ark of the covenant was taken by the enemy. Behold how great was the evil done through the negligence of a priest who did not fear what was said above: 'If thou declare not to the wicked his iniquity, I will require his blood at thy hand.' This terrible sentence causes me overwhelming fear, compelling me to be burdensome to you and to shout more frequently. Now, since you have heard with how heavy a blow a careless priest was

2 Isa. 58.1.
3 Luke 19.23,30.
4 1 Sam. 2.24,25.

struck, let us see what the priest Phinees deserved to hear from the Lord because he exercised holy severity. When he had killed two adulterers together by striking them with one blow, he merited to hear the Lord say: 'Phinees the priest, moved with my zeal, turned away my wrath that I might not destroy the people.'[5] In the psalm it is further written of him: 'Phinees stood up, and prayed: and the slaughter ceased. And it was reputed to him unto justice, from generation to generation for evermore.'[6]

(2) When sinners are rebuked for their crimes, what is worse, they do not all accept it with humility and obedience. Many do not blush to reply with most insolent boldness, saying: Am I the only one who did this? Have not those people, and those, done similar things or worse? Do not even the clergy with major orders commit such sins? Unhappy soul! A crowd of miserable people is a comfort to you. Can the individual sinner be tormented any less if immense crowds of sinners begin to be tortured in eternal punishment with him? How much better it would be for each one to flee the evil of his sins and exclaim in humble confession: 'I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me. Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee,' and: 'I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.'[7] For the good of his soul he should follow the examples of those who were honestly converted after many sins, rather than propose for imitation those who will suffer endless punishment after brief joy.

(3) With impious temerity, slanderous and careless souls are inclined to despair of God's justice, saying that many people who commit the same or perhaps worse sins suffer no evil in this world but remain healthy and wealthy in every kind of good fortune. O unfortunate and extremely deplorable presumption! Do the proud and wicked souls who commit

5 Num. 25.11.
6 Ps. 105.30,31.
7 Ps. 40.5; 50.5.

serious sins seem happy to you because they suffer no evil in this world? Listen to what the Scriptures say about such men: 'They are not in the labors of men: neither shall they be scourged with other men. Therefore their pride hath held them fast: they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness. Their iniquity hath come forth, as it were from fatness.'[8] They are not scourged at all in this world, because they are reserved for eternal punishment due to the excessive number of their sins. They cannot be punished in this short time, for they require endless torture. Now, our Lord and God, who does not punish these men in His justice, does not cease to exercise His children with diverse tribulations, as we read: 'God scourges every son whom he receives,'[9] and: 'those whom I love I rebuke and chastise.'[10] If He scourges every son He receives, then if He does not chastise a man He does not accept Him. If He chastises all whom He loves, He does not love a man if He does not chastise him. The power of God does not effect this, but the wickedness of men merits to suffer it, according to what is written: 'He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he who is just, let him be just still.'[11]

(4) If a man thinks he sins less in comparison with those who are worse, he should reflect upon these facts more diligently and attentively. While his sinful soul is still contained in that frail little body, he should provide for himself remedies that will remain forever. If, perchance, it delights him to be clothed in purple and fine linen and in the midst of wealth and luxury to be a slave to pleasure and dissipation, afterwards in the flames of hell he will have to ask in vain for a drop of consolation. When the wicked hear these truths, like madmen who have lost their sense of reason they

8 Cf. Ps. 72.5-7.
9 Heb. 12.6.
10 Apoc. 3.19.
11 Apoc. 22.11.

are accustomed to envy and ridicule those who preach them with great effort. Let them laugh as much as they want; they have the Lord answering for us: 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.'[12] They also have the Lord saying: 'Woe to you who laugh now! for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you who are filled! for you shall hunger.'[13] Let the proud laugh at us; let us with shouting and groaning both day and night implore God's mercy for their salvation, unworthy though we may be. We trust in the ineffable goodness of God that He will deign to punish them immediately as His children, so that by this rebuke they may be recalled from the abyss of all sins. Then, by performing suitable penance, they may merit to receive eternal rewards with the saints. Moreover, this can in truth happen, if without any delay the sinner has recourse to the remedies of repentance.

(5) You know, brethren, how heavy a burden threatens the lives of priests, of whom will be required the souls of all men. Since, as we mentioned above, you have seen what evil the careless priest Heli incurred and what glory Phinees received in the Lord's reward because he was moved by God's zeal, willingly accept, as you usually do, what is preached to you, even if it sometimes seems bitter and harsh. You know very well that doctors do not always offer the sick pleasant potions, but, frequently, bitter and harsh ones; sometimes they even have to cut certain members with an iron instrument or burn them by cautery. All this the sick patiently endure, because they desire to recover continued health after brief distress. We, too, who are seen to be some sort of spiritual doctors, though unworthy ones, must not always prescribe what is flattering and tender, but, sometimes, what is harsh and severe for those who appear sick in soul. Now, just as harmful fluids are eliminated by an exceedingly bitter potion,

12 Matt. 5.5.
13 Luke 6.25.

so the worst habits of sin are diminished by harsh reproof. When bodily doctors refuse to come to the sick, dearly beloved, they are begged with great humility, and rewards and gifts are promised, even though it is doubtful whether their remedies will be beneficial. How is it, then, that we who in no way at all despair of spiritual healing and seek neither earthly reward nor temporal gains should be despised in this way? We speak of our own accord, and desire to find nothing but repentance and amendment in those who are sick. It is uncertain whether a physical doctor can relieve a sick man; however, if spiritual medicine is willingly received, without any doubt the soul is revived even if it was wounded by many sins or was dead. Since bodily health is sought with such great expense and so much pain, why is not the health of souls willingly sought by men when it is granted without any expense? Why is this, brethren? Because there are many people who exert greater care for their body than for their soul. They should, however, devote greater solicitude to the soul where the image of God exists. For, when the body which is loved so much now begins to be devoured by worms in the grave, the soul will be presented to God by the angels in heaven. Then, if it has been good, the soul will be crowned, while if it was wicked it will be cast into the darkness outside. From this darkness let us attentively pray that God's mercy will deign to free us.

Sermon 6

ANOTHER ADMONITION TO THE PEOPLE: THEY SHOULD BE EAGER TO HEAR THE DIVINE LESSONS. IF A MAN CAN DO SO, HE SHOULD READ THEM HIMSELF; OTHERWISE, HE SHOULD WILLINGLY LISTEN TO SOMEONE ELSE READ THEM, BECAUSE WHAT HE RECEIVES FROM THE SACRED TEXT WILL SERVE AS FOOD AND DRINK FOR HIS SOUL FOREVER. MOREOVER, A COMPARISON OF THE CULTIVATION OF SOIL: THAT WE SHOULD BE ZEALOUS TO CULTIVATE CAREFULLY OUR SOULS LIKE A VINEYARD OR OLIVE GARDEN. A FURTHER COMPARISON OF CULTIVATION: ON PURGING VINES AND OLIVE GARDENS, ON CLEARING A FIELD OF THORNS AND STONES SO THAT THIRTY-FOLD, SIXTY-FOLD, OR A HUNDRED-FOLD FRUIT MAY BE PRODUCED. ON THE THREE PROFESSIONS OF VIRGINS, WIDOWS, AND THE MARRIED; ALTHOUGH SOME REMARKS ON THESE ARE CONTAINED IN ANOTHER SERMON, THEY ARE CONSIDERED FITTING AND SUITABLE HERE

(1) We thank God, dearly beloved, that in the midst of so many occupations He has deigned to bring us before your holy charity. Divine Mercy knows that even if we could come before you twice or three times each year we still could not satisfy our longing. What father is there who does not desire to see his children frequently, especially if they are good and faithful? May God grant to your prayers both that you may be able to find some good in us whom you have received with such charity, and that we may always see in you reasons to rejoice more fully. Therefore, since we thank God as much as we can for the presence of your charity, let us speak of our common salvation as the Lord gives us the power to do. When we say something of profit for your soul, dearly beloved, let no one try to excuse himself by saying: I have no time to read, and for this reason I cannot know or

fulfill God's precepts. Let no one further say: I am illiterate, so, if I carry out less of the Lord's commands, it will not be considered my fault. This excuse is vain and useless, beloved brethren. In the first place, even if a man is unable to read the divine lessons because he does not know letters, he can still willingly listen to someone else read them. If a man is literate, is it possible that he cannot find books in which he may read over the sacred Scriptures? Let us remove from ourselves foolish gossip and biting jokes; let us reject idle and dissolute conversation as much as we can. Then let us see whether enough time remains for us to devote to divine reading. Let us avoid those luxurious lunches which occupy us even until evening; let us despise the dinners which sometimes carry us along, even unwillingly, into the middle of the night. On these occasions our body is weakened by drunkenness, while the soul is probably wounded by obscene conversation or buffoonery, and may even die. Let us shun these evil occupations which weaken both the soul and the body, and we will see what time remains for us to think about something for the salvation of our soul.

(2) When the nights are rather long, who is there able to sleep so much that he cannot either read himself or listen to others read the sacred text for at least three hours? The very people who cannot read the divine lessons, as was already said, exert themselves even to the middle of the night in order to get drunk. Now, if we want to please God and to think more carefully of the salvation of our soul, we ought to love sobriety and flee far from drunkenness as the pit of hell. Listen, I beseech you, brethren; I will say something about which you are not ignorant. We know that some merchants who are illiterate look for literate mercenaries; although they themselves do not know letters, they acquire immense profits by having others write their ideas. Now, if those who are unlearned hire literate mercenaries in order to obtain earthly wealth, why do not you, whoever you are that

is illiterate, seek with the price of reward someone to read over the sacred Scriptures for you, so that you may be able to acquire eternal rewards through them? It is definitely a fact, brethren, that anyone who diligently seeks this believes that it will profit him for eternity. However, if a man neither will read the text himself nor willingly listen to others do so, he does not believe that he can derive any good at all from it. Therefore, I beg and exhort you, dearly beloved, if any of you know letters, read the sacred Scriptures rather frequently; those of you who do not should listen with attentive ears when others read it. The light and eternal food of the soul is nothing else but the word of God, without which the soul can neither see nor live. Just as our body dies if it does not receive food, so, too, our soul is killed if it does not receive the word of God.

(3) Someone may say: I am a farmer and continually engaged in earthly matters; I can neither listen to nor read the divine lessons. How many men and women in the country remember and repeatedly sing diabolical, shameful love songs! These things which the Devil teaches they can remember and say; are they unable to keep in mind what Christ shows them? How much more quickly and to better advantage, how much more profitably could these men and women from the farm learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, a few antiphons or the fiftieth and ninetieth Psalms? By getting and remembering these and saying them rather frequently they might have a means of uniting their soul to God and freeing it from the Devil. Just as shameful songs send a man into the darkness of the Devil, so holy songs show him the light of Christ. Therefore, let no one say: I cannot remember anything of what is read in church. Doubtless, if you really wanted to, you could; begin to wish it, and you will understand at once. Now, in order that no one will be able to excuse himself from good works, by the grace of God I want to suggest to you the reason.

(4) The care of our soul, dearly beloved, is very much like earthly cultivation. Just as in land which is tilled some things are torn out and others are completely uprooted in order that what is good may be sown, so this should also be the case in our soul. Vices should be uprooted and virtues planted; what is harmful should be torn out and what is useful inserted. Pride should be torn out, humility planted; avarice thrown away, mercy kept; dissipation despised, chastity loved. Just as you cannot plant good things in your land unless you remove what is evil, so you cannot plant the holy shoots of virtues in your soul unless you tear out the thorns and thistles of vice. I beseech you to tell me, whoever you are who said a little while ago that you could not fulfill God's precepts because you did not know how to read—tell me, who showed you how to provide for your vineyard, at what time to plant new shoots? Who taught you this, unless you saw or heard or questioned the best cultivators as to how you should work your farm? Why, then, are you not as solicitous for your soul as you are for your estate?

(5) I beseech you to notice, brethren, that there are two kinds of fields; one belongs to God, the other to man. You possess your farm, and God has His; yours is your land, God's is your soul. Is it right for you to cultivate your farm and leave God's deserted? If you till your land and do not till your soul, you are willing to settle your farm and to leave God's deserted. Is this just, brethren? Does God deserve this from us, that we should neglect our soul which He loved so much? Why do you not attend to your neglected soul and bewail it, just as you take care of your cultivated farm and rejoice over it? We will live in this world off of the land of our farm but a few days, while we will live in heaven forever as a result of caring for our soul. For this reason we should devote the greater part of our energy there, that is, to our soul. God has deigned to entrust to us our soul as his farm, with the idea that we should cultivate it eagerly. Therefore,

with God's help let us labor with all our strength, so that when God wishes to come to his field, that is, to our soul, He may find it cultivated, arranged, and all in order. May He find a harvest, not thorns; wine, not vinegar; wheat, rather than cockle. If He finds everything pleasing to His eyes, He will repay us with eternal rewards; but if He sees everything neglected and full of thorns, He will relegate us to eternal fire with the same thorns of our deeds.

(6) This is the reason, brethren, why we suffer frequent tribulations and distress: God somehow retaliates. We are unwilling to love our soul which He loves; He allows the farm which we love to perish. For a long time our soul had remained deserted because of many vices and sins, just as our land would remain long neglected by the enemy. Since we did not love the soul which God loved, we lost everything we were fond of in this world. For this reason, dearly beloved, let us learn to love our soul more than the body, eternal things more than transitory ones. Everything we do for the body will perish; only what each one stores up in heaven for the salvation of his soul will not be able to disappear. Therefore, let no one excuse himself and say he does not know letters, and for this reason cannot fulfill God's precepts. What God requires of us is not something great or hard or difficult. Eternal justice proclaims to you in your conscience: Govern your heart as you do your fields; cultivate your soul as you do your farm. Just as you remove superfluous shoots from your vine, so take evil affections from your soul. You cut off of your vine what is harmful; cut out of your soul what is evil. If a man does not consider his vine for a year, that year it produces fruit more abundantly but afterwards remains sterile without any fruit. Similarly, if a man does not remove evil thoughts and desires from his soul, he seems to bear fruit in the year of his life that he lives in this world as the result of his plunder and deceit, but afterwards he will remain sterile forever. Since he has not produced the right fruit,

eternal fire will torture him without mercy like excessive unproductive branches, as the Lord Himself said: 'But the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.'[1] Now, on your vine you cut off all superfluous buds and leave only two or three that are proper. Likewise, in your soul you should with the sword of the Holy Spirit and the sickle of the Cross cut out all longings which consider or desire the goods of another with evil intent, and keep only that wherein justice and mercy are perceived.

(7) You know, dearly beloved, what practice is observed when land is cultivated. First, thorns are pulled out and stones thrown away. Next, the soil itself is ploughed, harrowed, and dragged; then, in proper order, seed is sown in every fourth or fifth furrow. Thus it should also happen in our soul, beloved brethren. First, the thorns should be torn out, that is, evil thoughts. Next, the stones should be removed, that is, all malice and harshness ought to be taken away. Then, our heart should be broken up and cultivated by the plough of the Gospel and the ploughshare of the Cross: shattered by repentance, softened by almsgiving, and prepared by charity for the Lord's sowing. When the soil of our heart has been cleared and well cultivated, it can with joy receive the seed of the word of God and bring forth fruit, not only thirty-fold, but even sixty- and a hundred-fold.

Now, there are three professions in the holy Catholic Church: there are virgins, widows, and the married. Virgins produce the hundred-fold, widows the sixty-fold, and the married thirty-fold. One bears more, another less, but they are all kept in the heavenly barn and happily enjoy eternal bliss. Therefore, while the virgins think of Mary, the widows consider Anne, and married women reflect upon Susanna, they should imitate the chastity of those women in this life so that they may merit to be united and associated with them in eternity. Good virgins, who want to be such not only in

1 Matt. 3.12.

body but also in heart and tongue, are united to holy Mary with the rest of the army of virgins. Good widows, not voluptuous, loquacious, inquisitive, envious, haughty ones, serve God as blessed Anne did by fasting, almsgiving, and prayers, and together with St. Anne are united with the many thousands of widows. Moreover, married women who have observed mutual fidelity and have neither known anything outside of themselves nor even themselves except with the desire for children, if they continually give alms and observe God's precepts as well as they can, will merit happily to be associated with holy Job, Sara, and Susanna, along with the patriarchs and prophets.

(8) I beseech, you, dearly beloved, always call to mind and remember what we have mentioned for the salvation of your soul. Do not accept it only in passing; our sermon ought to fasten its roots in your heart, so that at the time of retribution it may happily bear the fruits of eternal life. If a man can retain all that we say, he should thank God, and always teach others what he remembers. If he cannot remember the whole, let him remember some part. If one cannot retain the whole, then let each one remember three or four thoughts. If one then tells another what he heard, by informing each other you can not only remember it all but even with Christ's help fulfill it in deed. One may say to another: I heard my bishop talking about chastity. Another may say: I remember that he preached on almsgiving. Still another says: There has remained in my mind what he said about cultivating our soul like we till our land. Another may report: I recall that my bishop said that a man who knows letters should be eager to read sacred Scripture, and one who does not should look for someone and ask him to read God's precepts to him so that with God's help he may fulfill what was read. Again, another may say: I heard my bishop say that just as merchants who are illiterate hire learned mercenaries so that they may acquire wealth, so Christians should seek,

ask, and if necessary, pay for someone to read the sacred Scriptures to them; that just as a trader gets money by having someone else read, so Christians should obtain eternal life in this way. If you do this and admonish each other, you can both live devoutly in this world and afterwards attain to the bliss of eternal life. If you immediately forget all that you heard from the bishop as soon as you leave church, you have come to church without profit and return to your home empty and without fruit. Far be this from you, brethren; may there rather be fulfilled in you what is written: 'Blessed are they that keep judgment and do justice at all times.'[2] Moreover, 'The mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity upon them that fear him: and his justice unto children's children to such as keep his covenant, and are mindful of his commandments, to do them.'[3] May the Lord in His goodness bring you to this mercy.

Sermon 7

An Admonition Showing How Good It Is to Read the Sacred Text, and How Bad It Is to Desist from Investigating It

(1) Through the goodness of Christ, dearly beloved, may you so receive the sacred text with an eager and thirsting heart that you may give us spiritual joy as the result of your faithful obedience. If you want the sacred writings to become sweet to you and the divine precepts to profit you as they should, withdraw from worldly occupations for several hours to reread the divine words in your homes and to dedicate yourselves entirely to God's mercy. Then will happily be fulfilled in

2 Ps. 105.3.
3 Ps. 102.17,18.

you what is written concerning the blessed, that 'On the law of the Lord he shall meditate day and night.'[1] Moreover, 'Blessed are they that search his testimonies: that seek him with their whole heart,' and: 'Thy words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against thee.'[2] Just as the man who hides God's words in his heart does not sin, as you have heard, so the one who does not hide them does not cease to sin. Now, it is not enough for merchants to acquire profits from just one source of income; they provide more means of increasing their substance, and farmers try to sow different kinds of seeds in order to be able to provide enough food for themselves and their family. How much more, then, should it not suffice for your spiritual profit that you hear the divine lessons in church, but among your company at home you should engage in sacred reading, even several hours, at night, when the days are short. Thus, in the storehouse of your heart you may be able to prepare spiritual wheat and to store pearls of the Scriptures in the treasury of your souls. Then, when we come before the tribunal of the eternal Judge on the last day, as the Apostle says: 'We shall be found clothed, and not naked.'[3]

(2) Notice carefully, beloved brethren, that the sacred Scriptures have been transmitted to us like letters from our heavenly country. Our country is paradise, and our parents are the patriarchs, prophets, apostles and martyrs; the angels are its citizens, Christ is our King. When Adam sinned, we were all as though thrown into the exile of this world. However, since our King is more kind and merciful than can be imagined or expressed; He deigned to send us through the patriarchs and prophets sacred writings as letters of invitation summoning us to the eternal and excellent country. Although human frailty in a rebellious spirit despised His writings, He

1 Ps. 1.2.
2 Ps. 118.2,11.
3 2 Cor. 5.3.

deigned to come down Himself, to free us from the tyranny and pride of the Devil, and by the example of His meekness to rouse us to true humility, by the sufferings of His Passion to free us from the power of our ancient Enemy, to descend into hell to rescue the saints of old who were being held subject to original sin, to ascend on high, to send the Holy Spirit from heaven to strengthen us against the snares of the Devil, and to direct His Apostles to preach the kingdom of God throughout the world. Moreover, He found us not only proud but impious, slaves not only to original, but also to actual, sins; yet He forgave us everything, without anyone asking it. Not only did Christ fail to oppress us with chains and shackles in order that we might perform laborious tasks, as we deserved, but in His ineffable goodness He kindly and mercifully invited us to reign with Him.

(3) Since this is true, dearly beloved, what do servants think of themselves when they dare to despise the Lord's precepts, not even condescending to reread the letters of invitation whereby He asks them to the blessedness of His kingdom? If any one of us sends a letter to his administrator and he in turn not only fails to do what is commanded but even refuses to read over the orders, that man deserves to receive punishment, not pardon; imprisonment, not freedom. Similarly, one who refuses to read the sacred writings which have been transmitted from the eternal country should fear that he perhaps will not receive eternal rewards and even not escape endless punishment. So dangerous is it for us not to read the divine precepts that the Prophet mournfully exclaims: 'Therefore is my people led away captive, because they had not knowledge.'[4] 'If anyone ignores this, he shall be ignored.'[5] Doubtless, if a man fails to seek God in this world through the sacred lessons, God will refuse to recognize him in eternal bliss. He ought to fear that, when he is shut outside

4 Isa. 5.13.
5 1 Cor. 14.38.

with the foolish virgins, he may merit to hear: 'I know you not, I know you not';[6] 'depart from me, ye workers of iniquity.'[7] What does this mean, 'I know you not, I know you not'? How can God not know those whom He sends into the fire? Probably for this reason, as has already been said, because they are unwilling to know Him by reading in this world, God will disdain to recognize them on the day of judgment. What is written in the Book of Solomon we ought to read with great anxiety and fear, not with indifference: 'He that hardeneth his ears from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.'[8] A man should first be willing to listen to God, if he wants to be heard by Him. Indeed, with what boldness does he want God to hear him when he despises God so much that he refuses to read His precepts?

(4) How is it, my brethren, that some Christians and, what is worse, even clerics, at times, when they are about to make a journey, order bread, wine, oil, and different items to be provided for themselves, but, while such great preparations are being made for his earthly journey so that his body may live, a man does not bother to read a single book to refresh his soul both here and forever? While he possesses two men within him, an interior one made to the image of God and an exterior one formed from the slime of the earth, man seems to show so much solicitude for the body which will be devoured by worms in the grave. However, the inner man which was made to the image of God is known to be tortured like a worthless slave by hunger and thirst, without the nourishment of God's word. He neglects God to such an extent that he scorns and despises His image within himself.

(5) As we think over these facts wisely and usefully, dearly beloved, let us strive to put an end to all idle gossip,

6 Cf. Matt. 25.12.
7 Luke 13.27.
8 Prov. 28.9.

calumnies, and buffoonery as much as we can. With all our strength let us flee from the hindrances of this world and seek some hours when we can devote ourselves to prayer or reading for the salvation of our souls. Thus may be fulfilled in us what is written: 'They that are learned shall shine as stars for all eternity.'[9] May He deign to grant this, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns God world without end. Amen.

Sermon 8

On Perseverance in Reading

(1) I beseech you, beloved brethren, be eager to engage in divine reading whatever hours you can. Moreover, since what a man procures in this life by reading or good works will be the food of his soul forever, let no one try to excuse himself by saying he has not learned letters at all. If those who are illiterate love God in truth, they look for learned people who can read the sacred Scriptures to them. This we have learned even illiterate merchants do, for they hire literate mercenaries and through their reading or writing acquire great profits. Now, if men do this for earthly wealth, how much more should we do it for the sake of eternal life? It often happens that a learned person may be poor in food or clothing, while one who does not know letters has more abundant wealth. The illiterate man who abounds in earthly goods summons the poor learned one and they mutually give each other what they need. The one by reading feeds the other with the sweet word of God, while the other by giving material substance does not allow his neighbor to suffer want. The learned man should satisfy the soul of the rich man,

9 Dan. 12.3.

while the latter should warm the body of the poor man with clothing and refresh him with earthly food. If this is done with charity, there will be fulfilled what is written: 'The rich and poor have met one another: the Lord is the maker of them both.'[1] Being pressed down with a heavy burden by possessing more than was necessary, the rich man was unable to walk, while the poor man perhaps was learned but was failing because of not having the necessities of life. For this reason, there was holy sharing on the part of both men. While the rich man gave the poor material wealth from his possessions, the poor man imparted the sacred lessons to the rich, and they both happily reach the eternal country on the road of this life. There took place in them what was written: 'He who had much had nothing over, and he who had little had not less';[2] and further: 'every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways smooth.'[3] Then the rich provide for themselves a level road to eternal life, when they give generous alms to the poor from the possessions which the Lord has given them beyond what is necessary for their livelihood.

(2) When we summon some people to the pursuit of reading, they try to excuse themselves by saying that because of military service or some household arrangement it is impossible for them to be engaged in the divine lessons. I can prove to such people in truth that they falsely pretend to excuse themselves with these words. Indeed, when the days are short, those who do not prolong their luxurious, delightful dinners by inebriating themselves until the middle of the night can read enough after the crow of the cock. Moreover, when at their banquets they are eager to feed their bodies with material food, between drinks and courses

1 Prov. 22.2.
2 2 Cor. 8.15.
3 Luke 3.5.

they could hold a book and satisfy their souls with the sweet word of God. In this way there will be fulfilled in them what the Lord Himself said: 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'[4] He did not say that earthly food should not be taken, but He did declare that a man should not only have his body satisfied with temporal food, but should also feed his soul with spiritual nourishment. Now, the whole human race possesses both an interior and an exterior man: the inner one made to the image of God; the outer one formed from the slime of the earth. Where is the justice, then, in the exterior man who was made of earth being sustained rather often with many delicacies and satisfied even twice a day, when the interior man who was created to the image of God sometimes is not nourished for many days or even months (so much the worse) with the food of God's word to feed the soul? For this reason, it is to be feared that some careless, ignorant persons receive the divine word with such dislike because their soul has been so weakened through hunger for the word of God that it can neither pluck its own food nor even take it. If a man has eaten sour grapes, his teeth become oversensitive and he cannot take bread. So, too, if for a long time a man is fed on the iniquity of this world, its excesses, or idle gossip, he scorns and refuses the sweet divine lesson even when it is read. Such a man cannot say with the Prophet: 'How sweet are thy words to my palate, O Lord!'[5]

(3) This likeness is clearly recognized in eyes of the body or heart. Light is food for the eyes, so that, when they suffer from inflammation or harmful fluids, the eyes cannot receive their food. Similarly, whenever the eyes of the heart are oppressed by bad habits, they not only are unable to receive the light of God's word, but, further, are tortured with excessive pain if it is forced upon them. Since no man,

4 Matt. 4.4.
5 Ps. 118.103.

whether good or bad, can be empty, if a man fills his soul with love of the world he cannot receive the sweetness of Christ. Such people are like vases full of mud which cannot take precious liquid, or like a thorny field which does not nourish but chokes the seeds sown in it. The pious, spiritual soul, on the contrary, protects itself from all evil by daily prayer, fasts, and almsgiving, stops wandering, and hastens to admit the sacred lesson into its burning, thirsting soul. What divine Wisdom foretold of Itself is fulfilled in such a soul: 'They that eat me, shall yet hunger: and they that drink me shall yet thirst.'[6] Therefore consider at once, brethren, and carefully notice that the man who frequently reads or listens to sacred Scripture speaks with God. See, then, whether the Devil can overtake him when he perceives him in constant conversation with God. However, if a man neglects to do this, with what boldness or with what feelings does he believe God will grant him an eternal reward, when he refuses to speak with Him in this world through the divine text?

(4) Now, consider what I am going to say, because it pertains to the subject of which we are speaking. Our mind seems to have the likeness of those mill-stones which are continually turned by the force of water, for, just as those stones cannot be quiet, so, too, human minds are never entirely at rest. However, with God's help it lies in our power to determine what we will devise in those mill-stones or in our minds. If you put wheat into it, that rocky stone will grind it, but if you put in chaff, mud, or thorns, it doubtless is reduced to flour. Similarly, if we send holy, pious thoughts into the mill of our mind which cannot be idle, we grind spiritual wheat, as it were, with which we prepare a banquet for Christ, who deigns to remain and dine with us. However, if we introduce thoughts that are idle and in no way edifying, we grind chaff, as it were. If we admit thoughts which lead to quarrels, avarice, or wickedness, out of thorns and thistles

6 Eccli. 24.29.

we prepare a sort of flour on which the Devil feeds. Moreover, if we think of something lustful or dissolute, we provide ourselves with food from the mire or a sewer. Everyone should know that what he has willed to grind in the mill of his heart in this world will supply his food afterwards in the future life. For this reason, let each one examine his own conscience. If he realizes that his mind continually yields to thoughts of pride, avarice, or dissipation, he should hasten to throw out what is evil and to think continually of what is holy and pleasing to God.

(5) And the Lord said in the Gospel: 'Do not seek the food that perishes, but for that which endures unto life everlasting.'[7] Just as you give your body food every day that it will not grow weak, so good works are the daily nourishment of your soul. The body is fed with food, the spirit is sustained with pious works. Do not deny to your soul which will live forever what you grant to your body which is going to die. All who are esteemed under the title of the priesthood are called angels through the testimony of the Prophet, who says: 'The lips of the priest keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts.'[8] Perhaps a man possesses no bread to extend as an alms to the needy, but still greater is what a man who has a tongue is able to give. It is more important to refresh a mind that will live forever with the food of the word than to satisfy with earthly food the stomach of a body that is going to die. Therefore, brethren, do not take from your neighbors the alms of the word. Paul says: 'If we have sown for you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap from you carnal things?'[9] 'Do good to the just, and thou shalt find great recompense: and if not of him, assuredly of God.[10] It is good that thou shouldst hold up the just, yea and from him with-

7 Cf. John 6.27.
8 Mal. 2.7.
9 1 Cor. 9.11.
10 Eccli. 12.2.

draw not thy hand: for he that feareth God neglecteth nothing.'[11] For this reason I beseech you with fatherly solicitude, equally admonishing and exhorting you, as was already said, to endeavor continually to read the sacred lessons yourselves or willingly to listen to others read them. By thus always thinking over in the treasury of your heart what is just and holy, you may prepare for your souls an eternal spiritual food that will bring you endless bliss. Christ does not lie when He says in the person of His Apostle: 'What a man sows, that he will also reap.'[12] With God's help let us endeavor to continually plant in the field of our heart by reading, praying, and performing good works those deeds whereof we may reap a harvest of justice and mercy on the future day of retribution. Then will be fulfilled in us what is written: 'Going, they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves.'[13] To this happiness may the good Lord lead you, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

**Sermon 9*

The Beginning of an Explanation or Instruction on the Creed

The faith and life of a Christian, dearly beloved, is the expression and obligation of the whole Creed. It is faith at present, life in the future; faith on the road, life in our fatherland; faith in hope, life in reality; faith in the battle, life in the kingdom; faith in action, life in recompense. Thus,

11 Eccle. 7.19.
12 Gal. 6.8.
13 Ps. 125.6.

if a man has faith with good works in this world, he will receive eternal life in the one to come. For this reason, at the beginning of the Creed we find: 'I believe in God,' and afterwards, at the end: 'eternal life.' Therefore, dearly beloved, the Creed is like an exceedingly beautiful building which is well begun; it has a very firm foundation, and an immortal summit, for it has God at the beginning and eternal life at the end. God is the foundation; eternal life, the summit. Faith, dearly beloved, is the entrance to life, the beginning of the road, the foundation of salvation. If a man thinks he grasps the sacred mysteries more by understanding than by belief, he is like someone leaving the road and seeking a by-path, building an edifice without a foundation, or searching for an entrance through a closed wall. When the weak mind cannot grasp a heavenly secret, the salutary compendium of faith must be applied. Therefore, let us explain the entire depth of the heart's belief in the words of that life-giving song. It begins thus:

I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten, eternal Son.

He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day He arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven.

He is sitting at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church,

The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

The resurrection of the body,

Life everlasting. Amen.

A creed is not only written on tablets, dearly beloved, but is kept in memory in the heart, and for this reason it is helpful to repeat what should never be forgotten. 'I believe in God the Father almighty.'

As your charity well knows, beloved brethren, the faith of all Christians rests in the Trinity. For this reason we repeat this verse of the Creed a third time for you, since the very number of repetitions is suitable as a sign of the Trinity: 'I believe in God the Father almighty.'

Dearly beloved, turn your attention to the whole Creed which you have just heard. Thus may the seed of the word find ready furrows in which to be able to plant with profit, fasten its roots firmly, and at the time of retribution produce abundant fruits of justice. Thus, the beginning of the Creed has: 'I believe in God the Father almighty.' When you hear God, understand a substance without beginning or end. When you hear the Father, understand the Father of the Son. By this very title whereby God is called Father, the Son is shown to exist equally with the Father. Now, how God the Father begot the Son I do not want you to discuss. God is to be believed the Father of His only-begotten Son our Lord, but the matter is not to be discussed; it is not right for a servant to reason about the birth of his master. God the Father declared from heaven: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him.'[1] The Father says it is His Son and commands us to hear Him; now, who would deny that what Truth says is true?

There follows: 'I believe in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten, eternal Son.' The word for the name Jesus is from Hebrew and means Saviour among us. Christ is named after chrism, that is, an anointing. 'The only-begotten,' it says. Christ is the only-begotten to the Father as brightness is to fire, courage to the brave, and wisdom to the wise. 'Conceived of the Holy Spirit,' it says. For this reason the Holy Spirit is called

1 Matt. 17.5.

the creator of the temple of the Lord's flesh. Begin now to understand from this the majesty of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Gospel says: 'The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.'[2] Therefore, behold the Trinity co-operating with each other. The Holy Spirit is said to come upon the Virgin, 'and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.' What is the power of the Most High, except Christ Himself who is 'the power of God and the wisdom of God'?[3]

Now, if you wish, these words which have been spoken may suffice for your charity. Tomorrow, in accord with your pious custom, you will more conveniently hear what remains, through the service of our brethren. May God Himself deign to grant this.

'He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,' it says. Let us investigate, beloved brethren, why the authors of the Creed judged it necessary to insert the name even of Pilate himself. Apparently for this reason, because there would be many Antichrists. It is to prevent any heresy from saying there is another Christ, since it is agreed that He was the one whom the Creed reported to have suffered under Pilate.

'He was crucified, died, and was buried, and the third day He arose.' Although the Gospels have most clearly testified concerning the evident fact of the Lord's Resurrection, which was further proved a reality by many men, the Apostle preached that the Saviour 'arose' from the dead 'on the third day.' If He had risen on the same day He died, or in the night which followed, some people would scarcely believe that He truly died. So, you see, the postponement of the Resurrection was a confirmation of His death; conversely, the truth of His death was the authority of reason. Unless you show me that a man has been bent down, you will not

2 Luke 1.35.
3 1 Cor. 1.24.

convince me that he has been raised up; on the other hand, you will easily prove he was stretched out in sleep, if you show that he has been aroused. 'And that he appeared to Cephas, and after that to the Eleven; then he was seen by more than five hundred brethren at one time.'[4] O wonderful, inestimable goodness of the Lord! He thought it would not strengthen the faith of the Church enough if all the Apostles saw Him after the Resurrection unless He would show Himself to the crowds who stood around.

There follows in the Creed: 'He ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty.' The right hand of God is not corporeally indicated here, beloved brethren, because the divine majesty is not designated in human form. Therefore, the Son is said to sit at the right hand of the Father because no left-handedness is found in Him. Now, since in sacred Scripture what is on the right always refers to the better things and what is on the left pertains to the worse, for this reason there is in God a right hand, that is, the good, and so we can conjecture there is a left, that is, evil. 'From thence' we say, 'He shall come to judge the living and the dead.'

'I believe in the Holy Spirit.' To exclude the miserable lies of all heretics, at the end of its text the Creed now honors the Holy Spirit with the same word of faith with which it honored the Father and Son at its beginning. It says: 'I believe in the Holy Spirit.' Lest He suffer the insult of an inferior being, He rightly shows that the fullness of the Godhead is equally claimed in Him, as well as the dignity of the Father and Son. In the Holy Trinity nothing is to be believed greater or lesser, for, when one is called greater, something is indicated as lacking in the lesser. If anyone asserts that one thing in the divine nature is greater and another lesser, there is an insult to the majesty which is considered greater; since the power and dignity of the Trinity is equal, whatever is taken

4 1 Cor. 15.5,6.

away from one doubtless is taken from the entire Godhead.

'I believe,' it says, 'in the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting. Amen.' Life everlasting was well attached at the end of the Creed, for faith in the Creed has the reward of eternity. In this way the order of the Creed is the ascending order of salvation: if each one faithfully comes to its summit, he will certainly possess the pivot of eternal salvation—under the guidance of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might for ever and ever.

*Sermon 10

The Beginning of a Selection on the Catholic Faith

(1) I beg and exhort you, dearly beloved, if anyone wants to be saved, let him learn the true Catholic faith, firmly adhere to it, and preserve it inviolate. Therefore, each one should see to it that he believes in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God; and yet not three gods, but only one. As is the Father, so is the Son and so is the Holy Spirit. However, every one of the faithful should believe that the Son is equal to the Father in divinity but inferior to Him in the humanity of His body which He assumed from ours; the Holy Spirit, in turn, proceeds from them both. Therefore, dearly beloved, believe in God the Father almighty and in Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son and our Lord. Believe that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary who was a virgin before childbirth and remained one ever after it, continuing without any contagion or stain of sin. Moreover, believe that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate for our sins, believe that He was crucified, believe that He died and

was buried, believe that He descended into hell to fetter the Devil, to free the souls of the just who were being kept under guard, and to take them with Him to the heavenly paradise. Believe that He arose from the dead on the third day, showing us the manner of our resurrection. Believe that He ascended into heaven with the body He had assumed from ours, believe that He sits at the right hand of the Father, believe that He will come to judge the living and the dead. Believe in the Holy Spirit, believe in the holy Catholic Church, believe in the communion of saints, believe in the resurrection of the body, believe in the forgiveness of sins, believe also in eternal life.

(2) Therefore, if anyone wants to be a disciple of Christ, he should keep His commandments and love humility as He Himself said: 'Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'[1] Why 'of heart,' I ask? Because there are many who seem to be humble outwardly, but within are full of the swelling of pride. Christ 'humbled himself' for us, 'taking the nature of a slave, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross.'[2] For us, brethren, and to take away our sins, He assumed human flesh, was born of a virgin, laid in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes, condemned by the Jews and persecuted by them, seized, scourged, defiled with spittle, crowned with thorns, fastened with nails, pierced with a lance, hung on a cross, given vinegar with gall to drink, and reputed among the wicked. Besides, dearly beloved, He endured all these things to free us from the jaws of hell. Therefore, since the Lord bore so many and such great things for us, we ought to follow in His footsteps and imitate the example of the saints if we want to reach Him. The Lord says in the Gospel: 'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me,'[3] and

1 Matt. 11.29.
2 Phil. 2.7,8.
3 Luke 9.23.

elsewhere: 'go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me.'[4] The holy martyrs, dearly beloved, followed in His footsteps and drank the chalice of suffering which He drank. The Apostle Peter was crucified for the name of Christ, Paul was beheaded, Stephen was stoned, and how many others suffered thus for His name.

(3) For this reason, brethren, crucify and 'mortify your members which are on earth,'[5] in order that you may please Him who created you. One who was proud should be humble; the unbelieving, faithful; the dissolute, chaste; the robber, worthy; the drunkard, sober; the sleepy, vigilant; the avaricious, generous; the deceitful, kind in speech. The detractor or envious person should be upright and kind; one who sometimes came late to church should now hasten there more frequently. Let each one redeem himself with abundant almsgiving, for, 'As water quencheth a fire, so alms resisteth sins.'[6] Distribute among the churches and the poor every year tithes of all the fruits you gather. Love fasting; avoid gluttony and drunkenness. Feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and seek those who are in prison. Receive strangers in your homes, wash their feet, and dry them with linen, kiss them tenderly, and prepare beds for them. Let no one commit theft or murder or adultery or perjury, or bear false witness. Every man should honor his father and mother that he may live long on earth. Let him cherish God more than himself and love his neighbor as himself. If anyone has committed any of the aforementioned offenses, he should quickly amend his life, make his confession, perform true penance, and then his sins will be forgiven him. If you are willing to do what I have suggested, brethren, you will merit pardon for your sins and obtain eternal life: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

4 Matt. 19.21.
6 Eccli. 3.33.
5 Col. 3.5.

Sermon 11

Why Our Lord Jesus Christ Freed the Human Race through His Difficult Passion and Not by His Power

(1) This idea affects many people, dearly beloved; such a thought sends many men of little learning into anxiety. For people say: Why did our Lord Jesus Christ, the power and wisdom of the Father, effect the salvation of man, not by His divine power and sole might, but by physical humiliation and human struggle? Surely, He could have overthrown the Devil and freed man from that tyranny by His heavenly power and majesty? It disturbs some people why God did not destroy death by His word, since He is taught to have given life in the beginning with a word. What is the reason why life, when lost, could not be restored by the same Majesty who created it when it did not yet exist? What need was there for Christ our Lord to accept His exceedingly difficult Passion, when He could have freed the human race by His powerful word? Why did He assume His incarnation, infancy, the course of life, insult, the cross, death, and burial for the restoration of man?

(2) Men with little knowledge say these things. Without any doubt, our Lord could have triumphed over the Devil and freed man from that domination by His divine authority. Of course He could have; but reason resisted it, justice did not allow it, and before God these are greater than every virtue and all power. If these qualities are praised in men, how much more so in God, who is the author and examiner of reason and justice? It was God's purpose to recover man, to restore him to eternity after he was deceived by the Devil. Now, here it must be remembered that mercy does not destroy justice; goodness does not remove equity. If God had struck down the Devil by His power and majesty and thus saved man

from his jaws, there would have been power, but not justice. The Enemy of the human race could have said: 'O Lord, you are just and true; in your goodness you made man, just as you once created me a good angel, not bad. Both to man and to me you gave the faculty of a free will. You gave legislation with the threatening statement that anyone who would touch what was forbidden would die in death. I destroyed myself through voluntary malice, then I advised man to do evil. I encouraged but did not compel him, because I could not force one who possessed freedom of his own will. Moreover, I was heeded more than your word was observed. By your judgment we received sentences deserved by our merits: I, an eternal curse; man, death and terrible punishment with me. Man united himself to me by his own will; he estranged himself from you with the same will, not unwillingly. He is mine. Because of sin we were destined alike for punishment; if he is torn away from me it is not justice, but violence. It is not a favor, but an injury; not mercy, but robbery. If man was unwilling to live when he could, why should he be brought back to life unwillingly? I presume to say, just Judge, that it is not proper to have different sentences in one case. Finally, if you want man to be saved by indulgence alone, all justice and reason ceasing, we both should be saved, both he who perished and I who destroyed him.'

(3) Would not this word of the Devil seem just and reasonable to God who has done and always does everything justly and reasonably? In order that this impious voice might find no room and all God's actions might appear just and reasonable, that power came down from heaven. He did not come to tear man away from the Devil by His power, but, observing equity in all things, as the Lord Himself mentioned to John the Baptist when the latter was excusing himself at the time of Christ's baptism: 'Let it be so now,

for so it becomes us to fulfill all justice.'[1] For this reason, then, our Lord and Saviour came 'in the likeness of sinful flesh,'[2] as the Apostle teaches, and bore all things, though without sin Himself. By taking upon Himself flesh from a sinful substance, while remaining without sin, He thus fulfilled justice and condemned sin in the body. This fact is proved by His conflict with the spirit in the desert, for the Devil is not overcome by the divine Majesty, but by a reminder of the commandment, by fasting, and by a legal reply. The different temptations of the Pharisees further proved it, for they often attacked our Lord. By doing good even though they were ungrateful, not resisting injury, overcoming insult with patience, and malice with kindness, all justice surely is fulfilled and every sin condemned. As a result of this, our Lord declared: 'The prince of the world is coming, and in me he has nothing.'[3] Therefore, this is the first victory, that a body could appear sinless though taken from a sinful race. Thus, sin could be condemned in the very body in which it had thought it could reign; instead, that which had once been overcome would now conquer. If His divinity alone had been victorious, it would not have been a source of great confusion to the Devil, nor would corporeal men have had confidence in the triumph.

(4) Let us see now what the cross had to do, since on it the sin of the world was taken away, death destroyed, and the Devil conquered. Certainly, as far as formal justice goes, the cross is not deserved except by sinners. Both God's law and that of the world are known to decree the cross for those who are criminally guilty. Therefore, because the Devil hurried about working through Judas, the kings of the earth, and the leaders of the Jews who 'assembled together' with Pilate 'against the Lord and against his Christ,'[4] Christ is

1 Matt. 3.15.
2 Rom. 8.3.
3 John 14.30.
4 Acts 4.26.

condemned to death. The innocent One is condemned, as the Prophet says in the psalm: 'For what has the just man done?'[5] Moreover, "they will hunt after the soul of the just, and will condemn innocent blood.'[6] There is condemned a person who was guilty of not even a slight sin, for no serpent could make a mark on this rock. He suffered with patience the insults, blows, crown of thorns, scarlet robe, and the other mockery enumerated in the Gospel. Although guiltless, He endured it in order that filled with patience He might come to the cross 'as a sheep for sacrifice.'[7] Although He could have returned the injury to His adversaries, He bore it all with kindness. Christ supported those mighty men, as David sings, 'as a man without help,'[8] although He might have avenged Himself by His divine majesty. Since He had completely dried up the fig tree with a word, if He had wanted to chide, all flesh which was valued as hay could much more easily have been dried up. Indeed, if those men who had come to seize Christ fell backward when they were kindly asked: 'Whom seek ye?'[9] and became as if dead, what would have happened if He had wanted to rebuke them? However, He fulfilled the mystery of the cross, the reason for His coming into the world. By this means the handwriting of sin was removed, and the power of the Enemy, as if allured by the hook of the cross, was seized. While justice and reason were preserved, the Devil lost the booty which he was holding.

(5) This is what we must believe happened. Christ our Lord, without any guilt or blame, was subject to the sentence of punishment; a sinless, innocent man was crucified. The Devil became guilty through the death of the blameless One. He became blameworthy by unduly inflicting the cross upon the just One. Christ's death profited man, for by taking death

5 Ps. 10.4.
6 Ps. 93.21.
7 Isa. 53.7.
8 Ps. 87.5.
9 John 18.4.

upon Himself Christ paid what Adam owed to God. Truly He became a sacrifice for the sin of men and their progeny, as blessed Paul declares: 'Christ loved us and delivered himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God to ascend in fragrant odor.'[10] Original sin could not have easily been forgiven, if a victim had not been offered for it, if that sacred blood of propitiation had not been shed. Even then the words in Exodus were not vainly said of our Lord: 'I shall see the blood, and shall protect you.'[11] That figure of the lamb represented this Passion of Christ our Lord. Blood is given for blood, death for death, a victim for sin, and thus the Devil lost what he held. To him it is now rightly said: 'You have no excuses, Enemy. The first Adam sinned, but I, the new Adam, did not receive the stain of sin. The very flesh which you had made subject to sin through your seduction has now conquered you by My justice. Let My justice benefit the sinner, let the death unduly imposed upon Me profit the debtor. You can no longer keep man in eternal death, for through Me he has conquered, overcome, and broken you. Truly, you have not been conquered by power, but by justice; not by domination, but, rather, by equity.' Thus the Enemy gave up what he had swallowed, and what he held was justly taken from him, because he had unjustly dared to attack what in no way belonged to him.

(6) Behold, dearly beloved, as I believe, the reason has been given why our Lord and Saviour freed the human race from the power of the Devil: not by power, but by humility; not by violence, but by justice. Therefore, since the divine mercy has bestowed upon us so many benefits without any preceding merits on our part, let us with His help labor as much as we can that the grace of such goodness may bring progress, not judgment, for us.

10 Eph. 5.2.
11 Exod. 12.13.

Sermon 12

An Exposition of Faith, and an Interpretation of Its Name

(1) In all the divine lessons, dearly beloved, faith is lauded with many praises; in fact, not only sacred Scripture but also the entire human race ceaselessly extols it. Would that it were praised by the lives of men as it is praised with the tongue! As it is preached with the mouth, so may it be observed wholeheartedly; as it is uttered with the lips, so may it be fulfilled in deed. So great is the virtue of faith that even those who refuse to keep it still presume to praise it. Truly deservedly is faith extolled, for without it no good work is ever begun or completed, according to what is written: 'Without faith it is impossible for anyone to please God.'[1] In the person of Christ and the Church it is said concerning it: 'Come, my neighbor from the beginning of faith.'[2] The Apostle Paul commended it individually in that list in which he praised all the saints of old: 'By faith Abel, by faith Henoch, by faith Noe, by faith Abraham pleased God,'[3] and so forth. Concerning this the Lord Himself said in the Gospel: 'Thy faith has saved thee,'[4] and again: 'if thou believest, all things are possible to him who believes,'[5] and: 'if you have faith even like a mustard seed, you will say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted, and be transplanted," and it will obey you.'[6] Although the virtue of faith is commended with so much praise, the essence of its name is not known by many. Faith received its name from a fact, that is, from

1 Cf. Heb. 11.6.
2 Cant. 4.8 (Septuagint).
3 Heb. 11.4-40.
4 Luke 17.19.
5 Mark 9.22.
6 Cf. Luke 17.6.

something which is done, and in it is contained the strength of all human as well as divine things. Therefore, even if a man says verbally and with many oaths that he possesses faith, if he is unwilling to fulfill in deed what he says verbally that he believes, that is not faith. Faith, as I said, derives its name from a fact.

(2) Let us see what a man should do if he wants to keep his faith intact. Doubtless, he should trust with all his heart that what is the exceedingly firm foundation of the Christian religion is true, namely, what God promises and what He threatens. Then, indeed, a man can understand the word faith and realize more fully its power, if he keeps before his eyes those two facts: the reward of eternal life and the penalty of endless punishment. Since it does no good to believe in one and doubt about the other, each one should examine his heart with great diligence to see whether he faithfully believes. Perhaps a man knows that in these two matters he possesses true faith, maintaining with a firm heart that the just will receive glory after their good deeds, while the unjust will suffer endless punishment after their evil. If, while faithfully believing these truths, he strives with his whole mind to perform good works so that he may arrive at the reward, and to avoid evil so that he may escape punishment, a man should rejoice that he is keeping an upright faith. Moreover, he should give thanks to God and with His help endeavor to persevere in the very work. Therefore, brethren, if you will carefully pay attention to this, you can realize more fully the name and power of faith. Because faith received its name from a fact, as I said before, if you say a thousand times that you have faith but refuse to fulfill in deed what you promise in words, it is not faith at all. Moreover, if you claim to believe in the reward which God promises and the punishment which He threatens and still, as was said, refuse to act in such a way as to escape endless punishment and obtain eternal rewards, there is no faith at

all in you. Not only does it fail to benefit you to say in words that you are believing, but it even does you much harm. It is better for a man not to promise than to be unwilling to fulfill what he has promised. The name of faith alone cannot free you. Instead, as was said already, you will be doubly guilty if you refuse to carry out what you have promised verbally, for the Holy Spirit proclaims to you through James: 'Faith without works is dead.'[7]

(3) Although a man ought to fulfill everything he promises if possible, that first excellent promise which we make to God at the time when we are reborn in baptism we should especially safeguard with His help. We are asked at baptism whether we will renounce the Devil, his pomps, and his works; we freely answer that we will renounce them. Since infants can by no means confess this themselves, their parents stand as surety for them. Therefore, if we faithfully observe what is the first and fundamental fact of the Christian religion, it is certain that with God's help we will be able to do the rest. However, if we neglect to fulfill what we promise to God, I do not know whether we will be able to preserve the faith which operates among men. Now, if we dangerously make a promise to an influential man when we neglect to carry it out, how much more dangerously do we make a promise to God and then not pay it? We fear a man so much because we dread death or material loss; we refuse to give God what we promise because we are entirely without fear for the death of our soul. Where is that Gospel text which says: 'Do not be afraid of those who kill the body. But rather be afraid of him who, after he has killed, has power to send it to hell'?[8] Therefore, what is promised to God should be done first of all, in order that what is promised to men may be fulfilled. Let each one examine his own conscience. If he sees that he has kept his promise and knows that he has renounced the

7 James 2.26.
8 Cf. Matt. 10.28.

Devil with his pomps both in word and in deed, he should rejoice that he has kept his faith whole. However, let him be secure concerning the past in such a way that he is solicitous for the future, because not he who has begun but 'he who has persevered to the end will be saved.'[9] Let no one believe, perchance, that faith can only be shattered by mortal sins. What difference does it make whether a man strikes and kills himself with a larger or smaller sword? Anyone who says this should notice that faith can even be endangered by idle talk, of which the Lord said an account must be rendered on the day of judgment. Moreover, 'Whoever says to his brother, "Raca," or "Thou fool!" shall be liable to the fire of Gehenna.'[10]

(4) Therefore, as was already said, let each one consider what he promised in the sacrament of baptism. Since he made a pact with the Lord, let him see whether he has violated it in any way. When the question was asked: 'Do you renounce the devil, his pomps, and his works?' then the priest offered a contract for approval. When the individual answered: 'I do renounce them,'[11] it was approved. For this reason, as was said above, if we refuse to do what we have promised to God, I do not know whether we will be able to preserve fidelity to men. Now, we have promised to renounce the Devil with his pomps and works. Almost no one is ignorant of what the Devil's pomps are, yet it is necessary for us to mention them at some length. All furious, bloody, or shameful spectacles are pomps of the Devil. To be a slave to gluttony or drunkenness, to subject one's unfortunate soul to lust or dissipation, certainly belongs to the Devil's pomps, because in such actions his will is fulfilled. What need is there to say concerning adultery, murder, robbery, and false testimony that they are part of the Devil's pomp and works,

9 Matt. 10.22.
10 Matt. 5.22.
11 These are some of the words belonging to the ceremonial of baptism.

since no man can be ignorant of the fact? There is no doubt that to observe omens and to summon charmers, sorcerers, soothsayers, or seers belongs entirely to the pomp and works of the Devil. For this reason, since few people can be found who happily are free from all these things, each one, as I already said, should return to his own conscience. While his soul is yet contained in this poor body he should hasten to redeem or correct through repentance, almsgiving, and especially the forgiveness of his enemies, whatever of these aforementioned vices he knows has been or is present in himself. With God's help let him strive so to cure past wounds that he may never again presume to commit anything whereby he might be wounded anew.

(5) Let no one vainly deceive himself by saying: I believe in God's mercy, that the faith and my baptism which I have received will never die. You believe rightly, if you have done what you promised. If you have kept the pact which you entered upon with the Lord, rest assured that your faith and baptism will not perish. However, if you have not fulfilled in deed what you promised in word, with what boldness or with what kind of a conscience do you feel sure that your baptism will not perish, since you have not kept your contract? Listen to the Lord's words saying: 'What does it avail you to call me, "Lord, Lord," and not to practise the things that I say?' and again: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me,' and: 'not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father in heaven.'[12] Carefully notice that, according to the lines quoted above, it does a man no good to say that he possesses faith, if he neglects to fulfill in deed what he promises in word. As the Scriptures say: 'If thou hast vowed anything to God, defer not to pay it. For an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth him. It is much better not to vow than after a vow not to perform

12 Luke 6.46; John 14.21; Matt. 7.21.

the things promised.'[13] In order that we may understand these facts clearly from our relations with our servants, let someone tell me whether it is enough for him if his servant says all day that he is his lord and ceases not to commend him with praises, but refuses to do what has been commanded. Therefore, if words without deeds do not please us, how much more can faith without works fail to benefit us in the sight of God? Above all, we must fear lest someone believes so strongly that he will receive God's mercy that he does not dread His justice. If a man does this, he has no faith. Likewise, if he dreads God's justice so much that he despairs of His mercy, there is no faith. Since God is not only merciful but also just, let us believe in both. Let us not despair of His mercy because we fear His justice, nor love His mercy so much that we disregard His justice. Therefore, we should neither hope wrongly nor despair wickedly. A man who hopes wrongly thinks he can merit mercy without penance and good works; one who despairs wickedly does not believe he will receive mercy even after the performance of good works. Therefore, above all, we should consider and fear lest we believe that faith without good works can suffice for us. Let us fear the words of the Apostle James: 'Just as the body without the soul is dead, so faith also without works is dead,'[14] and further: 'thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well. The devils also believe, and tremble.'[15] See, brethren, the Apostle says that a man who believes and does not act has the faith of demons. Now if one who believes but fails to act is called similar to demons, it is for you to judge what hope a man can have if he does not believe. The demons believe God exists, but they do not perform what He commands; this man is proved not to believe, because he is unwilling to fulfill in deed what he seems to promise in word.

13 Eccle. 5.3,4.
14 Cf. James 2.26. The text has *'anima'*; the Vulgate has *'spiritu.'*
15 James 2.19.

(6) Now I want to speak to your charity briefly, so that you may be able to understand more fully the works of faith and its virtue. The whole virtue of faith seems to consist in two things: one, as was already said, that we believe most firmly that what God promises is true; the other, that it is fixed in our minds that what God threatens is not false. Believe with your whole heart and mind that after good works you will receive the reward which is promised; similarly, without any hesitation believe that, if you have done evil, you will suffer endless punishment. Then you may know that your faith is entire, on condition that you fulfill by deeds what you believe in your heart, and without any delay turn away from evil to do good. In turning from evil you believe there is punishment; in doing good you believe that you will attain to a reward. Know, however, that it does not benefit you to believe the one and doubt the other. It is profitable to turn away from evil only if a man immediately does good. Likewise, it is advantageous to do good only if one completely turns away from evil. I have mentioned this because there are many people who seem to give alms as the result of robbery and fraud, yet are unwilling to desist from these evils. As I have said, dearly beloved, it is profitable for you to avoid evil if you know that you are doing what pleases God. Then you can devoutly believe a reward will be given to you because of your good works, if with God's help you begin to refrain entirely from evil. Indeed, if you want to do good and evil at the same time, what can it avail to build up on one side and to destroy on the other, to rob one man and to clothe another? To such men the Lord says in the Gospel: 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad.'[16] Moreover, Solomon says: 'As a dog is hateful when he returneth to his vomit, so also the sinner, when he returneth to his sin';[17] while in prophecy we read:

16 Matt. 12.33.
17 Prov. 26.11.

'woe to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways';[18] and elsewhere: 'no man can serve two masters.'[19] Therefore, as we have said rather often above, since faith receives its name from a fact or something which is done, a man says with confidence that he believes if he is willing to fulfill in deed what he has said he believes. The whole virtue of faith, as was said, is to believe both what God promises and what He threatens. Now, if we want perfect faith to abide in us, let us avoid evil in fear of punishment, and let us strive with all our strength to do good through the desire for reward. Then we will not be forced to endure eternal punishment with unbelievers and the wicked, but will merit to obtain unending reward along with the faithful who persevere in good works. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 13

A Sermon Necessary in Parishes

(1) I beg you, dearly beloved, to consider more carefully why we are Christians and bear the cross of Christ on our forehead. We ought to know that it is not enough for us that we have received the name of Christian, if we do not perform the works of a Christian. As the Lord Himself said in the Gospel: 'What does it profit you to call me, "Lord, Lord," when you do not practise the things that I say?'[1] If you say a thousand times that you are a Christian and continually sign yourself with the cross of Christ but do not give alms according to your means, your title of Christian can

18 Eccli. 2.14.
19 Matt. 6.24.

1 Luke 6.46.

profit you not at all. The sign of Christ and His cross are a great thing, and for this reason something great and precious should be signified by so precious a mark. Now, of what advantage is it to make a seal with a gold ring, when you store up rotten chaff interiorly? What is the good of putting the sign of Christ on our forehead and lips, when within we hide sins and offenses in our soul? When a man who is guilty of bad thoughts, words, or actions refuses to amend his life, but signs himself, his sin is not lessened but increased. When many men go out to commit theft or adultery, if they strike their foot they sign themselves, but they do not withdraw from their evil deed. The miserable men do not know that they are shutting in demons, rather than excluding them. If a man endeavors with God's help to reject sins and vices, always to think and do what is right, he justly puts the sign of the cross on his lips, for he tries to do things which merit the sign of Christ. It is written that 'The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power';[2] and again: 'faith without works is dead.'[3] Therefore, in order that we may bear the name Christian as a remedy, not unto judgment, let us turn over to good works while the remedies are still within our power.

(2) In order that with God's help you may be able to do this, keep peace yourself and recall to harmony those who are at variance. Avoid falsehood, dread perjury as perpetual death, do not bear false witness or commit theft. Above all, as already said above, give alms to the poor according to your means. Present offerings to be consecrated on the altar; a man of means should blush to share in the offering of another. Those who can should give candles or oil which can be put in lamps. Remember the Creed and the Lord's Prayer yourself, and teach it to your children. I do not know with what boldness a man says he is a Christian, if he refuses to learn the few lines of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer.

2 1 Cor. 4.20.
3 James 2.26.

Remember that you stood as surety before God for the sons you received in baptism, so always reprove and rebuke those whom you adopted at the font just as you do those who were born of you, so that they may live chastely, justly, and soberly. Do you yourself live in such a way that, if your children want to imitate you, they will not burn with you in the fire but together with you obtain eternal rewards. Those who hear cases should decide them justly and not accept bribes at the expense of the innocent, 'for gifts blind the hearts of the wise, and change the words of the just.'[4] Otherwise, while they are acquiring money, they may lose their soul. No one obtains unjust profit without a just loss. Where the gain is, there is the loss: a gain in the money coffer, but a loss in the conscience. Let no one get drunk; moreover, no one should force another to drink more than is proper at his feast, lest he lose both his own soul and that of his neighbor through intoxication.

(3) Go to church every Sunday. If the unfortunate Jews celebrate the sabbath with such great devotion that they do no earthly work on it, how much more should Christians devote themselves to God alone on Sunday and go to church for the sake of the salvation of their soul? When you come to church, pray for your sins; do not engage in quarrels or provoke scandals. If a man does this when he comes to church, by his arguing he wounds himself where he might heal himself by prayer. While you are standing in church, do not engage in idle conversation but listen patiently to the divine lessons. If a man wants to talk idly in church, he will have to render an evil account both for himself and others, because he neither listens to the word of God himself nor allows others to do so. Pay tithes to the church out of your little profits. One who has been proud should be humble; one who was an adulterer should be chaste. If a man used to commit theft or attack the property of another, he should

4 Deut. 16.19.

begin to give to the poor out of his own earthly substance. One who was envious should be kind; the irascible, patient. If a man has committed an injury he should seek pardon at once, and likewise immediately forgive one from whom he has suffered an injury. As soon as some infirmity overtakes him, a sick man should receive the Body and Blood of Christ, humbly and devoutly ask the presbyters for blessed oil, and anoint his body with it. Thus will be fulfilled in him what we read: 'Is any one among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil. And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.'[5] See to it, brethren, that a man hastens to the church in infirmity, and he will merit to receive both bodily health and the remission of his sins. Since we can find a double good in church, why do miserable men try to bring numerous evils upon themselves through charmers, fountains, trees, diabolical phylacteries, sorcerers, soothsayers, seers or oracles?

(4) As we already said before, always admonish your children and all your household to live chastely, justly, and soberly. Moreover, arouse them to good works by example rather than by words. Above all, wherever you are, whether at home, on the road, at a banquet, or at an assembly, do not utter shameful, dissolute words. Rather, continually admonish your neighbors and friends to endeavor to say what is good and honorable. Otherwise, perhaps, by calumny, evil speech, leading the chorus on the holy festivals, or singing dissolute, disgraceful songs, they may be seen to inflict wounds upon themselves with their own tongue which should be praising God. The unfortunate, miserable people who neither fear nor blush to execute dances and pantomimes before the very churches of the saints, even if they come to church as Christians, return from it as pagans, because that kind of

5 James 5.14,15.

dancing has carried over from pagan practice. See what kind of a Christian a man is if he has come to church to pray, but neglects prayers and does not blush to utter impious words of the pagans. Consider, moreover, whether it is right for dissolute songs, like poison of the Devil, to proceed from a Christian's mouth into which Christ's Body enters. Above all, do to others what you want to suffer from them; do not treat them as you are unwilling to be treated by others. If you will observe this, you can free your souls from all sin, because even a man who is not learned can and should remember these two sentences, and with God's help fulfill them in deed.

(5) Now, I believe that the unfortunate practices which have remained from the profane customs of the pagans have under God's inspiration been removed from these places because of your reproaches. However, if you still know some people who practice that most sordid and disgraceful act of masquerading as old hags and stags,[6] rebuke them so harshly that they will repent of having committed the wicked deed. If, when the moon is darkened, you know that some people still shout, admonish them, telling them what a grave sin they are committing, for in wicked boldness they are confident that by their shouts and sorcery they can protect the moon which is darkened at certain times by the Lord's bidding. Moreover, if you still see men fulfilling vows to fountains or trees, and, as was already said, consulting sorcerers, seers, or charmers, hanging devilish phylacteries, magic signs, herbs, or charms on themselves or their family, rebuke them harshly, telling them that one who does this evil loses the sacrament of baptism. Since we have heard that some men and women are so much deceived by the Devil that they do no work or weaving on Thursday, we assert before God and His angels that anyone who wants to do this will be condemned to the place where the Devil will burn him, unless he corrects his

6 As done in some pagan celebrations on New Year's Day.

grave sin by prolonged hard penance. I do not doubt that those most unfortunate and miserable people who refuse to work on Thursday in Jove's honor neither fear nor blush to do so on Sunday. Therefore, rebuke most harshly those whom you know do this. If they refuse to amend their life, do not allow them to have conversation with you or to come to your banquet. Moreover, if it is your affair, even whip them so that they may at least fear physical blows, if they do not think about the salvation of their soul. As we think of our danger, dearly beloved, on our part we advise you with paternal solicitude. If you willingly hear us, you will both give us joy and arrive happily yourselves at the kingdom. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 14

A Sermon of Admonition to the People

(1). Your faith and devotion have given us great joy, dearly beloved. The more attentively we see you come to church, the more joyfully we exult and give thanks to God because He deigns to take possession of your heart in such a way that we derive great joy from your manner of living. I beseech you to observe in your hearts what you show in the body. You know, brethren, that all men have the habit of wanting to show off their new clothes, if possible, or at least bright ones, when they come to church on the holy feasts. If a man has an old tunic he procures a new one, in order that he may go to church well-dressed; if he has a dirty one he hurries and washes it; if it is torn he tries to mend it. The purpose is that nothing about him may appear torn or dirty to human eyes when he goes among men. What we do with regard to our bodies is good and pleasing,

but you know it is wrong if we do not do the same thing in our souls. Therefore, just as you fix your body, fix your soul. Do not let your body wear bright garments in the sight of men while your soul is filthy in the sight of the angels. You fear a spot on your clothing: see to it that whatever is dirty in your soul is washed with the tears of repentance. If anything is black, let it be made white by almsgiving; if anything is defiled by dissipation, let it be washed clean by chastity. If anything in the soul is broken, let it be repaired by good works; and if anything is lost, let it be restored by prayer. It does us no good to adorn ourselves outwardly in various ways if inwardly we soil our soul with many sins. What benefit is derived from adorning the servant and disgracing the mistress, in other words, in fixing the body and robbing the soul of good works? Of course we feed the body, although, whether we will or no, in a few years worms are going to devour it in the grave. The soul, however, which we look down upon and despise, is to appear before God and the angels in heaven. Then it will be really in disgrace, if it has defiled itself by dissipation or avarice. Therefore I beseech you, brethren, let us think of the salvation of our soul as much as we can. For our body in this world let us keep only what is sufficient, namely, simple fare and proper clothing. Let us entrust whatever will be better and more useful for our soul to heaven, 'where neither moth nor rust consumes, nor thieves break in and steal.'[1] Indeed, what we keep for our bodies in dissipation in this life we lose either during our lifetime, or at least immediately after our death.

(2) When you assemble in church, let each one give in offering to the poor whatever he can. Moreover, entertain strangers in your dwellings with great kindness; do what you can for them, and wash their feet. Above all, visit the sick, and, if any people are in disagreement, with all your might recall them to peace and harmony. Thus, at the day of

1 Matt. 6.20.

judgment that desirable word may be addressed to you: 'I was hungry, and you gave me to eat,'[2] and all the rest. Let no one keep in his heart hatred for his neighbor, but love, instead, for if a man feels hatred toward even one person he cannot be at peace with God. A man's prayer is not heard by God as long as anger is stored up in his soul. Let that be enough for you, whatever God gives you as the result of your just labors. Let no one commit theft, or bear false witness, for it is written: 'A false witness shall not be unpunished.'[3] Let no one commit adultery, because the Apostle exclaims: 'Adulterers will not possess the kingdom of God.'[4] And further on: 'Every sin that a man commits is outside the body, but fornicators sin against their body.'[5] No one should do to another what he does not want done to himself, and he should do to others as he wants done to himself. One who has vowed virginity to God should, with His help, keep that promise. Moreover, he should live cautiously and carefully, lest he perish through some unbecoming familiarity or cause others to do so. Virginity is destroyed in a moment's time, and it cannot be restored in a hundred years. A man or woman who wants to marry should observe virginity until united in marriage. If they are first corrupted, they come to marriage dead, because as soon as adultery is committed the soul is strangled and dies. Any men before they take wives, or girls before they take husbands, whom the Devil has incited to corrupt themselves before marriage, afterwards are so held down by the Devil himself that they can only with difficulty, or not at all, preserve untainted their chastity.

(3) Above all, give tithes of all your profits to the church for the clergy and the poor; from the nine-tenths which remains in your possession, give alms. By this means redeem

2 Matt. 25.35.
3 Prov. 19.5.
4 1 Cor. 6.9,10.
5 Cf. 1 Cor. 6.18.

your sins and prepare for yourself eternal rewards. Accustom yourself neither to commit perjury nor to swear, because Scripture says: 'A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity: and a scourge shall not depart from his house';[6] while the Lord says: 'Do not swear at all. But let your speech be, "Yes, yes; No, no." '[7] Do not curse, because the Apostle says: 'Nor will the evil-tongued possess the kingdom of God.'[8] Do not slander, for it is written: 'Whoever speaketh ill to his brother will be destroyed.'[9] Do not lie to one another, because 'The mouth that belieth killeth the soul.'[10] Likewise, be not arrogant toward your parents or neighbors, because 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'[11] When you come to church, present the offering which is to be consecrated on the altar. Indeed, there are many devout poor people who frequently present offerings in church; although they scarcely have the means to live, still they do not come without some gift. On the other hand, there are some rich men who give nothing to the poor, make no offering to the church, and do not blush to share in the offering presented by the poor. These men receive judgment rather than a remedy. Therefore, while there is still time, such people ought to correct and amend their lives.

(4) I also advise you to destroy all the temples which you find. Do not make vows to trees or pray to fountains. Avoid enchanters as poison of the Devil. Do not hang on yourself and your family diabolical phylacteries, magic letters, amber charms, and herbs. Whoever does this evil should not doubt that he has committed a sacrilege. If anyone knows that near his home there are altars or a temple or profane trees where religious promises are made, he should be eager

6 Eccli. 23.12.
7 Matt. 5.34.37.
8 1 Cor. 6.10.
9 According to the editor, Dom Morin, a free translation of Prov. 20.13.
10 Wisd. 1.11.
11 James 4.6.

to destroy them by pulling or cutting them down. If anyone fails to do this, on judgment day he will have to render the whole account for the souls of however many come there and commit dreadful crimes. Notice, brethren, that we proclaim in the hearing of God and His angels: Do not despise your herald, if you want to escape your Judge. We give you the advice we have, and may the powerful Lord deign to instil it into your hearts, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 15

An Admonition Addressed to Those Who Think That It Is Enough for Their Eternal Welfare if They Do No Evil, even if They Do Not Accomplish Good

(1) There are many people, dearly beloved, who think that this alone is sufficient for eternal life, that they do no evil. Therefore, all who, perchance, deceive themselves with this false assurance should clearly understand that the mere avoidance of evil is not enough for any Christian unless he does as much good as he can. He who said 'Turn away from evil,' also said 'and do good.'[1] The Gospel gives us the same advice in terrible words: 'Every tree that is not bringing forth good fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire.'[2] It does not say the tree that brings forth evil fruit, but 'that is not bringing forth good fruit.' From this you can realize what hope the man who does evil will have, since the one who does no good will be cut down and cast into the fire. Therefore, the Lord says: 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me'; and:

1 Ps. 33.15.
2 Matt. 3.10.

'What does it avail that you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practise the things that I say?'[3]

(2) Someone may say: Although I have given nothing of my possessions, I have not taken the goods of another; I will be secure on the day of judgment. Listen carefully, and do not deceive yourself with false assurance. What did the Lord say? 'When the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Then he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink." But to those on his left hand he will say, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into everlasting fire; for I was hungry and you did not give me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink." '[4] Carefully heed what He said. He does not say: Come, ye blessed, take possession of the kingdom because you did not take the goods of another, but because you gave alms of your possessions. Likewise, He will not say to those on His left: Depart from me, accursed ones, into everlasting fire because you cheated another, but because you did not give of your earthly substance to the poor. I beseech you, brethren, carefully note that sentence and, as I have advised, retain it in your memory. If one who has not given his wealth to the poor is cast into the fire, where do you think the man who attacks the property of another by fraud will be cast? If the man who has not clothed the naked is thrown into the fire, imagine the fate of one who has robbed clothing. Therefore, I would like the man who believes it is sufficient not to have done evil, even if he has done no good, to tell me whether he would like to be treated by his servant the way he treats his Lord? Is he willing to have his servant do no good at all, as well as no

3 John 14.21; Luke 6.46.
4 Matt. 25.31,32,34,35,41,42.

wrong? We all desire our servants not only to avoid the evil we forbid, but also to fulfill the good we command. Now, although your servant will be seriously guilty if he steals your animals, he will not be without fault if he wills to care for them but negligently. It is not right that we do to our Lord what we are unwilling to suffer from our servant. We have not created our slaves nor do we feed them as with our substance, but God both created and feeds us; nevertheless, we want the servants we have not created to obey us with great diligence. Therefore, it is just that we who exercise dominion over our subjects should recognize our legitimate Lord. We have mentioned all this, brethren, in order that we may realize from the example of our servants that it is not enough for us to avoid evil if we are unwilling to do good.

(3) Those who think it sufficient for them to avoid evil usually say: If only I would merit to be found at the day of my death the same as I was when I went forth from the sacrament of baptism! Indeed, it is a fine thing for a man to be found cleansed from all evil on the day of judgment, but it is a grave wrong if he has not progressed in good works. To be as he was when he went from the sacrament of baptism is sufficient only for the man who departs from this life immediately after receiving the sacrament, for he has not had time to perform good works. However, for the man who has had a lifetime, and a long one, to be able to do good, it is not enough to be without evil if he also wills to be without good works. I would like to question the man who wants to be found at his death the same as he was the time he merited to receive the sacrament of baptism (although it is good to be always cleansed from evil, still it is a grave wrong not to advance in virtue). If he has planted a vine in his field, would he want it to be the same after ten years as it was the day he planted it? If he has planted an olive tree, let us see whether it would please him if after several years it is the same as when he planted it. If a son is born to him,

let him consider whether he wants him after five years to continue in the smallness and age of infancy. Since no one is pleased with such things, just as a man grieves over a vineyard or olive tree or son that shows no growth, so he should grieve if he recognizes that he has made no progress since the time he was reborn in Christ. We ought to know most surely that just as we want our possessions, whether in flocks or fruits of the field, to increase and grow in good qualities, so our God doubtless desires and expects of us that as His own special vine the Christian people should bear grapes rather than thorns. Then there will not be said of it what you often sing in the canticle: 'I planted a vineyard, and I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.'[5] Since, as the Apostle says, although we were wild olives we were grafted into the good olive tree, we should with God's help persist in good works, so that we may say with the Prophet: 'But I, as a fruitful olive tree in the house of the Lord, have hoped in the mercy of my God.'[6]

(4) Therefore, I implore what we mentioned above, brethren, that none of you think it sufficient for him to avoid evil. With all the strength he has, each one should turn aside from evil in order that he may do good, and hear the Lord say in the Gospel: 'What does it avail that you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practise the things that I say?' and: 'If you love me, keep my commandments.'[7] Through the goodness of God you know very well what Christ commanded in the Gospel: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, so that you may be children of your Father';[8] moreover: 'nevertheless give alms; and behold, all things are clean to you.'[9] Let us also hear blessed James freely proclaim on this subject: 'For just as the body without

5 Isa. 5.2.
6 Ps. 51.10.
7 Luke 6.46; John 14.15.
8 Matt. 5.44,45.
9 Luke 11.41.

the soul is dead, so faith also without works is dead.'[10] Therefore, with all our strength, dearly beloved, let us do what is good; let us not be satisfied to be as we were at the time we received the sacrament of baptism. By baptism we were freed from all evils, but with God's grace we ought to be filled with all virtues by a good life. If we rely on the sacrament of baptism alone, without good works, the unclean spirit who was driven out of us by the grace of Christ may return. Then, when he finds us without good works, he may bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and our last state will become worse than our first. Therefore, dearly beloved, in conformity with your usual pious custom willingly accept these words and reflect upon them rather carefully. If you do not trust in faith alone but also in good works, you will be able to refrain from evil deeds in such a way that with Christ's help you may continually exercise yourself in good works. Then you will happily merit to hear with joy and exultation that blessed, desirable word: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'[11] May He deign to grant this, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 16

The Qualities of Good and Bad Christians

(1) We rejoice, dearly beloved, and give thanks to God, because in accordance with our desires we have deserved to find you safe and sound. Truly, brethren, a father justly and rightly rejoices whenever he finds his sons in bodily health and devout fear of God. Moreover, because the divine pity

10 James 2.26.
11 Matt. 25.34.

has now given us a twofold joy in your and our well-being, it is our duty to suggest to your charity whatever pertains to the progress of your souls. It is imperative, dearly beloved, to desire with the mind's whole effort to seek or realize why we are Christians, and why we wear the cross of Christ on our foreheads. Know and understand, brethren, that we have not become Christians only in order that we may be solicitous for life. Thus, the Apostle says: 'If with this life only in view we have had hope in Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied.'[1] Anyone who thinks of nothing but this life is like the animals and flocks. For what do animals seek except eating, drinking, wantonness, and sleep? Like them are men who think more of their bodies than of their souls, who prefer gluttony and dissipation to chastity and justice. You ought to know, brethren, that we have become Christians in order to think always of the future life and an eternal reward. We are to labor more for the soul than for the body, because the body will be ours in the world for only a few years, while the soul, if we live well, will reign forever in heaven. If, however (though God forbid it!), we perform evil works and strive more for bodily pleasure than the salvation of our souls, I fear that when good Christians along with the angels receive eternal life we (heaven forbid!) will be cast into hell.

(2) It is not enough for us, brethren, that we have received the name of Christian, if we do not perform good works. Indeed, to be called a Christian is profitable for one who loves chastity, avoids drunkenness, detests pride, and repels envy as the poison of the Devil. That man is really a Christian who does not commit theft, does not bear false witness, neither lies nor forswears, nor commits adultery. Such a man comes to church quite frequently, and does not enjoy his profits without first giving something to God. Every year he gives tithes to be spent for the poor, pays respect to his priests, and loves all men as himself, with hatred for none.

1 1 Cor. 15.19.

Not only is such a person a good Christian, but Christ Himself dwells in him, so that he fears deceitful values and false measures as a sword of the Devil. He is a good Christian who, when he comes to church, presents the offering which is placed on the altar, and according to his means extends to the poor either a piece of silver or a morsel of bread. He welcomes strangers in his home, washes the feet of his guests, not only fails to stir up quarrels, but even recalls the discordant to harmony. Moreover, he bestows honor and the love of true charity upon his parents and elders. By the example of his pious life and by spoken advice he teaches his sons and neighbors to live purely and prudently. That man is a good Christian who, as often as the sacred feasts come around, in order that he may receive Holy Communion more serenely, observes chastity with his wife during the few preceding days, that he may presume to approach the Lord's altar with a free and serene conscience because of his chaste body and pure heart. He himself remembers the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and he also teaches his sons and daughters faithfully to keep them in mind.

(3) Behold, brethren, you have heard the qualities of good Christians. Therefore, let us strive as much as we can, with God's help, that the name of Christian may not be false in us and the sacraments of Christ suffer no injury. Let us, instead, always think of Christian works in our hearts and fulfill them in deed. Truly, what kind of a Christian is he who scarcely ever comes to church and, when he does come, does not stand in the church to pray for his sins but makes excuses or stirs up quarrels and strife? Moreover, if there is an opportunity he drinks to excess, and when he has become drunk gets up like a madman or maniac to dance in a devilish manner, to pantomine, and to sing disgraceful, dissolute, love songs. Such a man does not hesitate to commit theft, or fear to commit adultery, bear false witness, curse, or commit perjury. Whoever perform such actions, whether

men or women, receive the name of Christian and the sacrament of baptism, not as a remedy, but to their own judgment. Unless these people do penance, they will perish forever.

(4) Behold, brethren, we are showing you the qualities of good Christians and of bad. Therefore, imitate those whom you see are good; those whom you know are evil, reprimand, reproach, and rebuke them so that you may have a double reward for your own progress and their amendment. May those, then, who are good, chaste, sober, humble, and gentle, persevere with God's help in their good works; may those who do evil correct themselves at once before their souls depart from this life. If they die without repentance they do not enter into life, but are cast into death. From this punishment may the good Lord deign to free us, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 17

The Beginning of Bishop St. Augustine's Sermon on Charity

(1) We bless our God, dearly beloved, and render abundant thanks to Him because in accordance with our desires we have merited to find you safe and sound. Indeed, He is a kind Lord who knows the secrets of the heart and realizes that we experience no greater joy in this world than when we know that both in heart and in body you are healthy and perfect in the fear and love of Christ. Thus, to be sure, the Apostle spoke: 'This is our joy and our crown, if you stand fast in the Lord.'[1] Moreover, because we ought to rejoice more over the salvation of a soul than over bodily

1 Phil. 4.1.

health, let us talk about eternal happiness so far as the Lord permits.

(2) When the Gospel was read a little while ago, our conscience trembled violently and our whole heart was shaken with excessive fear. Although the reward of the just afforded us consolation, still, because we know our negligences, the punishment of sinners instilled a great fear in us. For we heard the Lord say concerning Himself: 'When the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, he will sit on the throne of his glory; and before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then he will say to those who will stand on his right hand, "Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink." But to those who will be on his left hand he will say, "Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you did not give me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink." '[2] And later He says: 'These will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into everlasting life.'[3]

(3) Who would not tremble violently at these words, dearly beloved? Whose conscience does not feel an intolerable jolt? I say truly, brethren, that anyone who does not awaken at such thunder is evidently not asleep, but dead. Indeed, we have heard the irrevocable sentences: the one which the just will hear, never to depart from heaven; and the other which sinners will hear, never to leave hell. However, the kind and merciful Lord did not utter these sentences to lead us to despair, but to make us watchful and careful. Since He

2 Matt. 25.31-35, 41-42.
3 Matt. 25.46.

willed to warn us before the lapse of so many years, He wants to find us ready when He comes. See, indeed, how He wants to move you as He exclaims: Look out! Anyone who wants to aim an arrow at another does not shout to him: Look out! A man wants to shoot an arrow in such a way that the one who is to be struck may not know it except when he is unable to avoid death. An ordinarily wicked, hostile man does this, but God, who is good and kind, is not like that. Since the beginning of the world He has stretched out the bow of His power, and still He has never aimed an arrow.

(4) However, we should not be without anxiety, dearly beloved, because we know that He is keeping His patience for such a long time. The fact that such great things happen in the world and He still does not avenge them indicates patience, not carelessness. God has not lost His power, but is preserving us for repentance. Yet, the longer He awaits your amendment, the harsher will be your punishment if you refuse to amend. God indeed holds the sword, and He wishes to strike sin; we, on the contrary, defend our sins because we love them. Thus, we who should be the accusers of our sins become their defenders. Truly, dearly beloved, God does not want to kill the sinner, but his sin. Like a good doctor He wants to strike the disease, not the person who is ill. But, what is worse, we often despise the doctor and love our sickness: we love our sin and despise God. Sin, indeed, is like this, a dragon, a viper; but concerning the Lord it is written: 'Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon.'[4] We, on the other hand, embrace our sins like lions and dragons. But our God, who wants to punish sin and save the sinner, daily exclaims to man: Cast off your sin from you and without you it will die. If you refuse to throw aside your sin you will perish with it, for sin cannot go unpunished. God wants to kill sin, not to strike the sinner.

4 Ps. 90.13.

(5) God exclaims to you: Cast off your sin from you. For I made you, but you yourself made your sin. Indeed, I do not want to kill you whom I made, but the sin which you made yourself. I am willing to free you from your captivity and to kill your enemy; I want to drive away your sickness, to rescue you who are ill. You, however, love and embrace your sin: that which might have perished without you is going to perish with you. Because you might have received heaven if your sin had perished, by keeping it you will suffer eternal punishment. What greater kindness could be conceived or described, dearly beloved, than that of our Lord God? Before the lapse of so many years He deigns to warn us what we should seek after, what avoid. The Lord has willed to reveal to the whole world the sentence which will be imposed on judgment day.

**Sermon 18*

A Sermon of the Bishop St. Augustine on Good Works, Wicked Despair, and the Crow's Voice

(1) While we admonish you rather frequently concerning good works, we know that some of us are disinclined to justice and almsgiving, but are disposed to dissipation or avarice. We almost suspect that such people do not have any fear of a future judgment. Truly, brethren, when we see careless, tepid Christians neither avoiding sin nor providing eternal rewards for themselves by good works, what remains but to suppose that they do not believe rewards will be repaid to the good and punishments meted out to the wicked by the just judgment of God? Indeed, brethren, we realize that a man in truth fears His judgment, if we see him engaged in good works. However, if men do not try to perform good works and if they pretend not to have time for reading or

prayer, what advantage is it to them that they claim faith in words, when they are proved to destroy the truth by their deeds? The Apostle James says: 'What will it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but does not have works? Can the faith save him? And if a brother or a sister be naked and in want of daily food, and one of you say to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," yet you do not give them what is necessary for the body, what will it profit? So faith too, unless it has works, is dead in itself.'[1] Now, the Lord speaks to such men, rebuking all their infidelity: O incredulous men, if you do not believe what I have promised, consider what I have done. Heaven and earth did not exist; I spoke, and they were made. You, to whom I have given promises, did not exist, and you were created. Did I make you when you did not exist, only to deceive you now that you live? Therefore, listen to what I say, and believe you will receive what I have promised.

(2) It is a weak, sickly, perfidious, cowardly, disconnected, paralyzing, mean, disagreeable thought that closes the gates of the mind when daily sins are thought to be passing. One passes away today, another will pass tomorrow, and again another the next day. You keep on adding to tomorrow and another tomorrow but neglect to be converted, and do you not fear that sudden death may overtake you? Are not men suddenly carried off in death? Why do you see to it that you put off doing penance and neglect to seek divine mercy? In truth, you say: Conversion is a good thing. If it is good, let it be done at once. If it is a good thing to accept quickly, is it bad to accept now? Tell me, why do you admit it is a good thing but do not hasten to receive it? Perhaps you will tell me: God has made me secure. How did He do that? Because it is written: 'On what day soever the sinner and the unjust is converted, all his iniquities I shall forget.'[2] Behold when God

1 James 2.14-17.
2 Cf. Ezech. 18.21,22.

made me secure. Yesterday I had ten sins, today fifteen, perhaps twenty tomorrow. Since what the Lord said is true, whenever I am converted He will forget all my past sins and all my iniquities. Why do you frighten me? God has promised me pardon, and will you make me despair? I cannot deny that God promised this; why, then, will you not be converted today? Because, if I am converted later, He has promised to forgive me more then just as He would less today. O your security! Certainly you made me secure. I see that by God's word pardon is indeed promised to you; but who promised you tomorrow? Therefore, let each one be converted to God as He says: 'Be ye converted, seek God; and when you have found him, let the wicked forsake his way.'[3] Be converted, you who hope presumptuously.

(3) There are two vices of the human race, whereby some men perish through hope and others through despair. Now, it is no wonder that a man perishes through despair, but it is more marvelous that he does so by hope. For this reason let us see and briefly consider who is lost by hope, who through despair, and what remedy God offers to them both. A man perishes from despair when he says: I know my evil deeds, I realize my crimes; how can it be that God will forgive me for what I have done? He perishes by despair when he says: What is the good of what you say? I will do now whatever I can: I will lose whatever I fail to do. God will condemn me for one sin just as well as for many; so, if I will not have that life, I do not want to lose this one. So, why should I not follow my wishes? Why not fulfill my passions? This man is lost through despair. Another man fears the abyss of despair and begins to perish through hope. How? In the way I mentioned a little while ago. Whenever I am converted, he says, God promises to forgive me everything; I hope in His mercy, because He will pardon me all. He postpones it from day to day, and suddenly the final day of his

3 Isa. 55.6,7.

death comes; the deferring is gone, and damnation remains.

(4) The Scriptures speak[4] to both classes. You would perish through despair? Listen to the Lord say: 'I desire not the death of the wicked, as much as that he be converted and live.' You wished to die? Return and live. If God wanted you to perish, He would take you away when you were sinning. Since you have sinned so much and still live, you are invited to repentance. These words God speaks to you if you despair: 'I desire not the death of the wicked.' Even if you want your death, I do not. You did not make yourself, but by despair you have perished. God, however, created you when you did not exist, afterwards sought you when you were lost, found you through the Blood of His Son, and redeemed you. He Himself exclaims to you: Return from the abyss of despair. Return, because 'I desire not the death of the wicked, as much as that he be converted and live.' You have begun to return from the abyss of despair, but now stand as though in the middle path; I do not want you to go in the opposite direction. Do not lose confidence through despair over your sins, but do not trust in a longer life. Therefore, be converted. Tomorrow I shall be converted, he says. Why not today? What is the matter with tomorrow? Rather, what is wrong with today? I know that my life will be a long one. I am sure God did not promise that to you. Did an astrologer perhaps promise you a long life, looking for someone to perish with him?

(5) Finally, then, I say: I grant your life will be long. If it is long, let it be a good one; if it be short, let it also be good. Now, who would tolerate a long bad lunch? You do not want one, nor do you want to have a long bad dinner; do you want to have a long bad life? However, men have so little regard for their life that they refuse to have anything bad but it. Our life is our business; our reputation belongs to others. If you buy a country estate, you look for a good one.

4 Ezech. 18.32.

You want to marry, so you choose a good wife. When you wish sons to be born to you, you desire good ones. Lastly, to speak of the commonest things, if you buy shoes, you do not want bad ones. Yet you love a bad life? Why does your life, which is the only thing you want to be bad, offend you, with the result that among everything good you alone are bad?

(6) However, tell me, brother, do you know how long you are going to live? Or, when you read that you will receive pardon if you amend your life, do you also read anywhere there that a long life is promised to you? Did you, perchance, make an agreement with death? I grant that you will live a hundred years, and even add ten times a hundred. What will it profit? Adam himself, if he were still living today, would have lived few years, because they all had to come to an end. Therefore, be corrected, be ready, and you will not fear the last day as a thief who will enter your house when you are asleep. Therefore, listen, you who wanted to perish through despair. Listen to Scripture whenever you want to do so again. For it says: 'I desire not the death of the wicked, as much as that he be converted and live.' If you have been converted from despair, listen in such a way that you may return from perverse hope and be established in good hope. Hear what the Lord says[5] to you if you hope wrongly and procrastinate from day to day: 'Delay not to be converted to God, and defer it not from day to day.' These are God's words, not mine. You have not heard them from me, but along with you I hear: 'Delay not to be converted to God.' You, however, reply: Tomorrow, tomorrow. O crow-like word! Just as the raven sent out from the ark did not return, and has now grown old and says: *Cras, cras.* It is a crow-like voice: a white head, but a black heart. *Cras, cras,* is the voice of the crow. The raven did not return to the ark; the dove did. Therefore, let the noise of the crow perish, let the sigh of the dove be present. The one who advises you exclaims:

5 Eccli. 5.8,9.

'Delay not to be converted to God, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee.'

(7) Now, if we reflect upon these truths with great fear and solicitude, dearly beloved, and with God's help turn our souls to the healing of repentance and the remedies of almsgiving, we will happily come before the tribunal of Christ to be crowned, not condemned: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and might for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon 19

Preaching of St. Augustine to the People

(1) Dearly beloved, I bless God who has deigned to give me this opportunity of deserving to see your charity. For a long time I had been yearning to meet you, but the various needs of the times did not allow the fulfillment of my desire until now. With God's help I rejoice at the sight of you, especially because I have merited to find you safe and sound. For this reason we suggest what I must say and you should willingly hear concerning the salvation of your soul, so that you may always realize that you are Christians and wear the sign of Christ on your forehead, because we have not been made for the misfortunes of this world but for eternal happiness. Therefore, let us think thus of earthly advantages, so that we may labor all the more for the salvation of our souls. Our body, indeed, will be ours only a few years in this world; our soul, if we live purely and justly, will after the resurrection always be with the angels in heaven and will reign forever with Christ. Let us hasten, then, to do as much good as we can, so that we may happily deserve to reach that eternal land.

(2) Since capital crimes—that is, murder, adultery, theft,

and bearing false witness—not only throw men out of heaven but even cast them into hell, let us repair the rest of our daily sins, which are never lacking, by constant almsgiving and forgiveness of our enemies who may have sinned against us. If anyone commits an injury, let him immediately ask pardon of the person he has injured. Likewise, the one who has been wronged should immediately forgive, in order that we may safely say in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us, O Lord, our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[1] Let each one come to church with an alms according to his means. If someone cannot give more, let him at least give a piece of silver to a poor man. Whoever can should give new clothes to the poor; whoever cannot, should at least give something old. Should this be impossible, a man should give bread to the hungry, so that he may deserve to hear what was said in the Gospel: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was naked and you covered me.'[2] Above all, receive strangers, wash the feet of your guests. Moreover, possess peace yourselves, and recall to harmony those whom you know are enemies or discordant. Let the very little profits which by God's gift you will derive from your just labors be enough for you. Let not one of you keep envy toward another in his heart, for it is written: 'By the envy of the devil death came into the world.'[3] No one, then, should superabound in gain, lest, perchance, while he is acquiring earthly substance he might lose his soul. Let no one bear false witness, for it is written: 'A false witness shall not be unpunished.'[4] Let no one feel hatred, for it is written: 'Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.'[5] No one should curse another, because it is written: 'The

1 Matt. 6.12.
2 Matt. 25.34-36.
3 Wisd. 2.24.
4 Prov. 19.5.
5 1 John 3.15.

evil-tongued will not possess the kingdom of God.'[6] 'Let no one overreach anyone in a matter,'[7] because this is a serious sin.

(3) When you hear cases, pronounce a just judgment. Do not accept bribes at the expense of the innocent, lest, perchance, you incur the loss of your soul in exchange for such a gain. Refuse false, deceitful measures as the poison of the Devil. As the sacred feasts approach, observe chastity with your wives for several days preceding, so that you may approach the Lord's altar with a peaceful conscience. When you come to church, do not provoke quarrels or offense. Do not drink to the point of drunkenness. Do not sing dissolute songs for dancing, because it is not proper that devilish words be uttered by your mouth into which the Eucharistic Christ has entered. While standing in church, devoutly pray for your sins and listen in silence and quiet to the divine lessons which are read. Do not talk uselessly in church, because a person who is willing to be occupied with idle gossip incurs guilt for himself and others when he neither listens himself to God's teaching nor permits others to do so. Above all, give tithes of your profits to the church, for it is just that God who has given you everything should receive one-tenth in alms for the poor. He has said: 'As long as you did it for one of the least of these, you did it for me.'[8] You yourselves learn especially the Creed and Lord's Prayer, and teach them to your children. Indeed, I do not know whether a person should even be called a Christian if he neglects to learn the few words of the Creed. Perhaps someone will say that he cannot remember it. How great is the misery of the human race, if both men and women can learn dissolute songs, and do not blush to say them to their own and others' sin, but their conscience cannot learn these few words!

6 1 Cor. 6.10.
7 Cf. 1 Thess. 4.6.
8 Matt. 25.40.

(4) When you come to church, present the offering which is to be consecrated on the altar. If a man has the means and makes no offering, with what feelings will he dare to share in the offering which the poor have given? Above all, pay respect to your priests. Do not speak ill of one another, for it is written: 'Whosoever speaketh ill will be removed from the land of the living.'[9] Let no one under any persuasion worship before an idol or drink to those things which are sacrificed to idols. A man who is baptized ought to avoid what is profane. No one should dare to marry his aunt or cousin or his wife's sister, for it would be wrong for us to perish through evil dissipation arising from diabolical pleasure. Let no one in any sickness dare to summon or question sorcerers or seers or magicians in wicked pleasure. No one should hang phylacteries or charms on themselves or their possessions. If anyone does this evil, he destroys the effect of the sacrament of baptism, unless repentance saves him. Let no one dare to observe ritual in Jove's honor on Thursday by not performing any work. I beseech you, brethren, that no man or woman ever do this, lest the Lord judge him to be among pagans rather than among Christians. For such a person in a sacrilegious manner transfers to Jove's day what ought to be observed on Sunday.

(5) Further, as often as some infirmity comes upon a man, he should hurry back to the church. Let him receive the Body and Blood of Christ, be anointed by the presbyters with consecrated oil, and ask these presbyters and deacons to pray over him in Christ's name. If he does this, he will receive not only bodily health, but also the forgiveness of his sins. Thus the Lord Himself deigned to promise through the Apostle James, saying: 'Is any one among you sick? Let him bring in the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over

9 Prov. 20.13.
10 James 5.14,15.

him, anointing him with oil. And the prayer will save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.'[10] Why, then, should a man kill his soul with sorcerers and seers, enchanters and diabolical phylacteries, when he can heal both his soul and his body by the prayer of the priest and consecrated oil? Bodily sickness is related to health of heart, and God scourges in this world those whom He loves. Even if health returns rather slowly to the infirm, let us not murmur against God, but give thanks to Him. He deigns so to chastise us by sickness in this world, in order that He may give us eternal rewards in the future life. Many are sick without harm to themselves, for, while they are well in body, they do not cease to think about robberies and riotous living, but as often as we are ill we do penance more, give alms, and attain to eternal rewards. Therefore, whether health comes to the sick quickly or slowly, let us always be grateful, because He knows what is necessary for us—when it is better for us to be sick and when healthy. Presuming upon your kindness, I give this advice to all your daughters, in accord with my fatherly solicitude: that no woman take medicine for purposes of abortion, or kill her children after they are conceived or born. However many children she conceives, let her nurse them herself or give them to others for support. As many as she kills, of so many she will be the guilty murderess on the day of judgment.

(6) Dearly beloved, always remember what belongs to God, and keep that lesson ever in your heart and mind. Thus you will deserve to receive eternal rewards in the future life for it, and to hear on judgment day the words: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world':[11] with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and power for ever and ever. Amen.

11 Matt. 25.34.

*Sermon 20

A Selection from a Letter of St. Fatalis on the Life of the Christians

(1) I exhort you, my children, and I admonish you with paternal devotion to think more carefully of the salvation of your soul, fearing what is written: 'The burdens of the world have made them miserable.'[1] Let us get rid of everything contrary, I beseech you, before the scourge is changed into a sword. Let the king enter his bedroom, that is, let Christ enter your heart. Let the bridegroom have an open approach to his bride; that is, let Christ have one to your souls. Let us receive Him into the bedroom of our heart, so that He may receive us into the happiness of His kingdom. The Apostles, who were models of religious observance, invite us to follow and imitate them. They summon us, on the condition that we may reign with them in heaven if we suffer with them on earth. They were not separated from Christ by torments; we are separated from Him by idle gossip or detraction. They did not yield to dangers, but we are overcome by pleasures. In order to begin following Christ they despised all their own goods. They were generous with their own wealth; we are avaricious in what does not belong to us. Let us omit the hostile, contrary things that are not ours, and let us follow what is ours. Let it not be annoying for us to hear with good will what is profitable. If we live by the spirit, let us cling to the footsteps of Christ. If we follow Him, Christ ought to appear in our actions, for every tree is known by its fruit. Therefore, we please God if we do the things of the spirit. But, if we seek the things of the body, we cannot please God.

(2) Do not deceive yourself, brother; I do not wish that

1 The source of this quotation is unknown.

you be led astray by feigned and false justice. The kingdom of God is not in name, but in virtue. Something great cannot be acquired without labor. I do not know how a negligent soul can come to Christ who is in heaven when, instead, he follows a leader who was thrown out of heaven. Since both we ourselves and our possessions belong to Him, why do we not serve Christ in such a way that we may in no way serve the Devil? Why are we not so good that we cannot be at all evil? Why not so fair that we may be in no way abominable? Why not so healthy that we may be not at all weak? Can He who gave us life be unable to give us nourishment now? Or can He not grant us a tunic, since He made our body? We fail in obedience to God more than He does in favors toward us. He has more to rebuke in me than I have to grieve over in Him. The reader shouts, the priest preaches, the deacon proclaims silent teaching; we still murmur about calumnies and strifes. The fist strikes the breast in such a way that not even in church does the hand rest from the injustice of evil. What is the benefit of striking your breast if you do not reject the sins which are shut up inside? It does not profit a man to be punished for his sins if he returns to them again. If we are always performing the actions of a man, when do we intend to do the things of God? And, what is worse, there are many people who rejoice in the titles of the just and of Christians, but are not just before the eyes of the Lord. Many are called holy in comparison with those who are worse, but every man will not be at once what he is called by men, but what he is proved by God; not what he is established as in name, but what he is felt in conscience. How many seem to be [innocent] of seizing what belongs to another, not because they do not wish, but because they cannot. . .[2] In them is found that crow-like voice: *Cras, cras*—tomorrow I shall be converted. God does not seek

2 There is a lacuna in the text here. The editors supply 'innocent,' as it seems to be justified by the context.

procrastination in the voice of a crow, but confession in the coo of a dove.

(3) Someone will say: I am young, a long time of life still remains for me. When I reach mature age, then it will be necessary for me to think about fear of my Lord. Of course I intend to return to Him sometime. This life is not mine. I lost the life I had received, and it was acquired by the Blood of my Lord. Since I have been bought at a great price, I cannot do my own will. He who deserved everything did not have a place to rest His head; I desire everything, although nothing is due to me. How can a rich man become a soldier in that land where the poor man is commander? Why is it that our fathers were so solicitious, while we are so secure? They were in tears, so that they might arrive at joy; we, on the contrary, live in joy, with the result that we will attain to tears. I do not know how we will be like them in heaven, for we appear unlike them in all respects on earth: different in actions, different in food, different in clothing, and different in thought. They lived in hunger, we in luxury; they in cold, we in heat; they in hair-cloth, we in finery. Although great, our old people proved their faith by holy works; we are innocent in words, they were in virtue. However, no one is innocent in the sight of God, except the man who is pure of heart. In His presence no one is just unless he fulfills His commands, not only loving his neighbor but wholeheartedly loving his enemy. God expects to find innocence and justice in a man both interiorly and exteriorly. Come to the Lord with both your heart and your body. Let piety summon you to His service, before His wrath receives you into punishment. Moreover, when you daily say: Today is ended, tomorrow I shall be living, do you not know how suddenly God's wrath comes?

(4) Do not delay to be converted to the Lord, brethren, for there are some who plan for conversion but postpone it. We confess our faith to no purpose; they always do so with

fidelity. Now, it is easy to say: I know God, I believe in Him, I love Him, I fear Him, I serve Him. A man does not know Him if he fails to believe in Him. He does not believe in Him if he does not love Him. He does not love Him if he does not fear Him. He does not fear Him if he does not serve Him; and he does not serve Him if he despises Him in many things. 'The kingdom of God is within you,'[3] proclaims the Lord. The arms of the Gospel are not burdensome, but light, to those who are willing. Therefore realize, brother, that the kingdom of God does not consist in name only, but in virtue. So, be simple, pure, and strong in faith like holy Abraham, that you may fulfill all of God's commands. Through the intercession of the saints may He deign to remove perversity entirely from us, so that we may be engaged in worldly actions only for the sake of food and clothing. Thus, the greater part of our life will remain in which we can seek what is profitable eternally for our souls by devoting ourselves to reading and prayer. May our Lord Himself deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

**Sermon 21*

This Admonition of St. Augustine Shows That There Are Many Useful and Exceedingly Necessary Steps in Perfect Love and Charity

(1) We are admonished in both the Old and the New Testament, dearly beloved, how we should observe perfect charity. Our Lord Himself said in the Gospel: 'Thou shalt

3 Luke 17.21.

love thy neighbor as thyself.'[1] For this reason let us discourse for a little while on the love of one man for another, since the affections of men are perverse. If a man loves himself perversely, he also loves his neighbor perversely; if he loves himself correctly, he also loves another correctly. There are, indeed, shameful, abominable loves; for example, the affections of adulterers, seducers, or the impure. All laws, both human and divine, detest evil affections; so, remove unlawful ones and let us seek those that are lawful.

(2) Licit love arises from marriage, although this is still carnal, for you see that it is common to the herds. Moreover, sparrows which sing have mates and make nests; they hatch eggs and nourish their young. Although this lawful love clearly exists in men, you see that it is carnal. The second kind of love is that of one's children, but this, too, is still carnal. A person who loves his children is not worthy of praise, but one who does not is certainly detestable. Am I to praise as great in a man what I see in a tiger? Serpents love their young; so do lions and wolves. Therefore, do not think it a great thing that you love your sons; in this affection you are still compared to serpents; so, if you did not love, you would be surpassed by the snakes. I am now speaking of honorable loves, for I have excluded those which are shameful. Another kind of love, that of relatives, seems peculiar to men, if not habitual. However, the love which extends beyond kindred is greater than that which is held between them, for, if a man loves his relatives, he still loves his own blood. He should love others who are not his kindred, even adopting the stranger; then his love is much more extensive. It increases so much that it goes from spouse to children, from children to relations, from kindred to strangers, from strangers to enemies. However, that it may reach this point, it has many steps.

(3) Therefore consider what I will say concerning friend-

1 Matt. 22.39.

ship. There are friends—excepting the friendship which should not even be called that because it arises from an evil conscience: there are men who commit evil together and seem to be united thus because joined by an evil conscience—but excepting this abominable friendship, there is a kind which is still carnal. Because of the habit of living together, speaking and associating together, a man may become sad if he is deserted by the friend with whom he was accustomed to speak and associate. Two men may come together, walk with each other for several days and then no longer wish to be separated. Now, this pleasure of friendship is certainly fine; let us discuss it further because we are seeking the steps of love. Let us see whether we have arrived at friendship such as I mentioned. This friendship is one of habit, not of reason, and the herds have it, too. Two horses eat together and long for each other. If some day the one should go ahead, the other hurries after, as though desiring his friend. He is with difficulty guided by a rider, and until he arrives urges ahead upon his own impulse. He settles down when he reaches the one who went ahead; he carried his burden, but was urged on by the weight of love; then he came as if to his own place, and stopped. This friendship of habit still exists in herds; let us rise higher than this. There is another higher type of friendship which belongs to reason, not habit, whereby we love a man because of faith and a mutual friendly disposition in this mortal life. Whatever we find higher than this is divine. If a man begins to love God, he will love nothing in man except Him.

(4) Now, let your charity first see how spontaneous the love of friendship ought to be. You should not possess or love a friend in order that he may give you something. If you do love him so he will give you money or some temporal advantage, you do not love him, but what he offers. A friend must be loved without recompense, for himself and not for anything else. If, then, the rule of friendship urges you to

love without return, how must God be loved without reward, since He orders you to love men? Nothing is more agreeable than God. In a man there are things which offend, but through friendship you force yourself to tolerate what is displeasing in a man on account of friendship. Since, then, you should not destroy friendship with a man because of things which can be tolerated, by what things should friendship with God be compelled to be dissolved by you? You will find nothing more agreeable than God, for in Him there is nothing to offend you, provided you do not offend Him. There is nothing finer, nothing sweeter than God. Now you are going to tell me: I do not see Him; how am I to love one whom I do not see? Behold how you may learn to love one whom you do not see. I will show you how you may try to see what you cannot behold with these eyes. See, now, you love a friend; what do you love in him? You love him without any return. Perhaps that friend of yours, to omit other facts, is an old man; for you can have an old man as a friend. What do you love in the old man? A crooked body, a white head, the wrinkles on his forehead, his drawn jaw? If it is the body which you see, compared with old age nothing is so ugly; yet you love something, even if you do not love the body which you see because it is ugly. How do you see what you love? For if I were to ask you: Why do you love? you would answer me: The man is faithful. Therefore, you love fidelity. If you love fidelity, God is seen with the same eyes with which fidelity is perceived. For this reason begin to love God, and you will love man for His sake.

(5) Listen to a great testimony. The Devil certainly is the accuser of the saints. Since in the presence of such a Judge he cannot force Him to make a mistake, he is unable to bring false charges against us. He knows to whom he is talking. Therefore, since he cannot say anything false against us, he looks for something true to say. For this reason, our Adversary, who envies us the kingdom of heaven and does

not want us to be there where he was thrown down, says: 'Doth Job worship God in vain'?[2] We are urged by our Adversary to worship God without hope of reward, for, when he was looking for something to accuse, he thought he had found something great when he said: 'Doth Job worship God in vain?' He did not see Job's heart, but only his riches. We ought to be careful not to love God for the sake of a reward. What reward is there for which you are going to love God? What kind of a reward is it that God will give you? Whatever else He gives is always less than Himself. You do not worship spontaneously in order that you may receive something from Him. Worship Him without hope of return and you will receive Himself, because God is reserving Himself for you to enjoy. Now, if you love what He made, what must He be who made it? If the world is beautiful, what must be the Author of the world? Therefore, tear your heart away from the love of creatures so that you may cling to the Creator, and then you may say what is written in the psalm: 'But it is good for me to adhere to my God.'[3]

(6) Now, if you desert the One who made you and love the things He made, by this desertion you are an adulterer. Thus the Epistle of James prŏclaims, calling men adulterers. Why adulterers? You ask why? 'Adulterers,' he says, 'do you not know that the friendship of this world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God.'[4] He explained why he said 'adulterers.' The soul that deserts its Creator to love a creature is an adulterer. Nothing is more chaste or more delightful than love of Him; if He is abandoned and another embraced, you become unclean. O soul, in order that you may be worthy of His embrace, let go of those other things and cling to Him without expectation of reward. Then it is that the Psalmist

2 Job 1.9.
3 Ps. 72.28.
4 James 4.4.

says:[5] 'But it is good for me to adhere to my God.' In the previous verse he spoke thus: 'Thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to thee.' Then, as if he would show what fornication is, he added: 'But it is good for me to adhere to my God.' I desire nothing else but Him; to cling to Him is my good, my good without any hope of return. For this reason grace is so named, because it certainly is gratis. Therefore, when you have begun to love God spontaneously, there is reason for assurance that you love your friend thus and that, moreover, you love him so that with you he may love God. Notice that ordinary friendship with which we began, and note, too, the progress we have made through it. A husband loves his wife, and the wife her husband; doubtless, he wants her to be well and she him. She wants to keep him safe and happy. In addition, she loves him because she herself wants to be safe and happy; what she wishes for herself she also desires for him. She loves her children; in fact, who wants to have her children anything but well? She loves a friend, and who wants a friend to be anything but safe? For this reason, if anything happens to him she trembles with fear, becomes sad, is disturbed, and hurries so it will not happen; if it does, she loudly bewails it. What does she want, then? To have him well. Therefore, since everyone wants the object of his affection to be well, if only he understands what true well-being is, he will begin to love it in himself and be compelled to love it also in his friend.

(7) If you are looking for God with bodily eyes, behold the three children freed from fire; if you seek Him with the eyes of faith, see the Machabees crowned in fire. The one kind of safety is to be loved; the other, enjoyed. The latter must be used, for it is transitory. What doctors call well-being, brethren, is not the true kind. We are soothed in a way, but sickness is perpetual in the frailty of our flesh. Do you think a man is sick when he has a fever and is well when he is hungry?

5 Ps. 72.27,28.

He is well, it is said. Do you want to see how great an evil it is to hunger? Leave him without medicine for seven days, and he dies; but, because you daily supply a remedy, he lives. Now, the remedy for hunger is food; for thirst, drink; for weariness, rest; for sitting too much, walking around; for excessive walking, sitting down; for fatigue, sleep; for too much sleep, staying awake. Now, consider how weak the human body is; if a man makes use of the assistance I mentioned and continues to do so, he becomes weak. Hungering, you sought the help of food. Here is the food. You eat and are refreshed; the more you are refreshed, the weaker you become. You were looking for assistance in thirst; if you drink much, you who were bothered by thirst are choked from drinking a great deal. You have become tired from walking and want to sit down; sit down forever, and see whether you will not grow weary. Therefore, no matter what a man applies for the purpose of driving away something else, if he continues in it he grows weak.

(8) What kind of well-being is this, brethren, if it is transitory, frail, perishable, and empty? Truly, as it is said: 'For what is your life? It is a mist that appears for a little while.'[6] Therefore, 'He who in this life loves his soul loses it; and he who hates his soul in this world keeps it unto life everlasting.'[7] What is life everlasting? True well-being. If you see the friend you loved in this world in order that he might be well, love him now because of that well-being which is eternal since you now long for it. Moreover, whatever you wish to give your friend now wish to give for this purpose, that he may possess salvation with you. For you love justice and you want him to be just; you love to be near God and want him to be there, too; you love eternal life, and desire him to reign there with you forever. You see that enemy of yours persecuting you; the fact that he does so is wrong. You

6 James 4.15.
7 Cf. John 12.25.

should temper your anger toward him, for he has a fever in his soul. Now, a friend in the world loves a man like his own life and wants to drive a fever from this friend whom he loves like himself for the sake of present health. Thus, you should love whomever you do for the sake of eternal life. When you find anger, indignation, hatred, or iniquity in him, try to drive out this disease of the soul as a worldly friend removes bodily disease. Indeed, love him for this very purpose, to make him what you are, and there will be perfect charity in you. If you discover it, love your spouse, your child, your relative, your neighbor, the stranger, your enemy, for this same purpose, and you will have perfect charity. If this is true, you conquer the world, and the prince of this world is driven away. You have heard what the Lord said:[8] 'The prince of the world has been cast out,' because He was to suffer and through His passion bring love to men; 'Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends.' Therefore, He first loved us in order that He might be loved in return; He died first for all men so that no one might fear to die in His name. He cast out the Devil in order that He might build up charity in the hearts of men. Out where? Out of the hearts of men. Ambition brought him in, so charity threw him out.

(9) As we very carefully think over the steps of charity mentioned above, brethren, let us not return evil for good to the Lord. By His coming Christ fettered the strong one, that is, the Devil, and removed from his power all of us who were his vessels. Now that we have been cleansed from all evil by His grace, let us strive to be filled with all virtues, fearing what the Lord Himself said: 'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through waterless places in search of a resting place and finds none. Returning after this and finding the house which he had left empty, he takes with him seven other spirits more evil than himself, and the last

8 John 12.31; 15.13.

state of that man becomes worse than the first.'[9] Therefore, in order that we may not suffer such a fate, let us labor as much as we can to introduce virtues in place of our vices, so that we may be able to obtain God's mercy.

Sermon 22

On Charity

(1) If we could present ourselves more frequently to your charity, dearly beloved, with Christ's help we could infuse into your pious souls, if not abundant rivulets, at least tiny drops from the copious fountains of sacred Scripture. Thus, the fertile and fruitful soil of your heart might receive the rain of the word of God, and so produce a rich harvest of good works. Then, at His coming, the Lord would rejoice to find in the field of your heart not only thirty-, but even sixty-fold fruits, and one hundred-fold, and with these fruits He might prepare a storehouse in heaven, not a fire in hell. However, since we are impeded by many occupations, even though we cannot present our humility to you as you would wish, with God's help we wish to instil in you something brief by a sermon, yet sufficiently long for the advantage of souls. And in this brief message, if you attend diligently, you can discover what is advantageous for your soul. What is this brief but long thing that can satisfy man? The Apostle tells us: 'The purpose of this charge is charity from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned.'[1] Notice, brethren. What can be found shorter in words yet more noble in action than charity from a pure heart, and a good con-

9 Cf. Luke 11.24,26.

1 1 Tim. 1.5.

science, and an unfeigned faith? This brief word is pleasant, so that you will remember it; it is sweet, that you may devoutly preserve it. What is sweeter than charity, dearly beloved? If anyone does not know it, he should taste it and see. What, then, should a man taste if he wants to perceive the sweetness of charity? Listen, brethren, to the Apostle when he says: 'God is love.'[2] What is sweeter, brethren? If anyone does not know it, let him hear the Psalmist say: 'O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.'[3] Therefore, 'God is love,' so that, if a man possesses charity, God abides in him and he in God.

(2) If you possess charity, you have God; and if you have God, what do you not possess? If a rich man does not have charity, what does he have? If a poor man has charity, what does he lack? Perhaps you think that he is a rich man whose coffers are full of gold, and he is not rich whose conscience is full of God. That is not true, brethren. A man really seems to be rich, if God deigns to dwell in him. Now, what can you be ignorant of in the Scriptures if charity, that is, God, begins to take possession of you? What good works can you fail to perform, if you deserve to carry the fountain of good works in your heart? What adversary will you fear, if you merit the possession of God, your King, within you? Therefore, dearly beloved, keep and preserve the sweet and salutary bond of charity. Above all, observe true charity, not the kind that is spoken only with the lips and is not kept in the heart, but that which is uttered with the mouth and continually preserved in the heart. Thus may be fulfilled in us what the Apostle says: 'Being rooted and grounded in love.'[4] Now, just as charity is the root of all good things, so 'Covetousness is the root of all evils.'[5] As there can never

2 1 John 4.8.
3 Ps. 33.9.
4 Eph. 3.17.
5 1 Tim. 6.10.

be anything evil in charity, so nothing good can ever be found in the desire for money.

(3) These two roots are planted in two fields by two farmers, dearly beloved. Christ plants the one in the hearts of the good; the Devil plants the other in the hearts of the bad. No evil springs from the root of charity, and no good from that of avarice. The Gospel speaks the truth when these two roots are mentioned and described as follows:[6] 'Every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit'; moreover: 'a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.' This thought is not mine, brethren, but the Lord's. May there be such an abundance of charity in you that it extends to your enemies as well as to your friends, for, truly, the son of charity loves his enemies in accord with the Lord's command. Now, since you have heard the praise of charity and the reproach of avarice, let each one take thought and consider the field of his heart. If a man perceives charity in himself, he should rejoice and with all the vigilance of his heart preserve its holy sprouts. However, if he discovers any shoot of avarice in the field of his heart, with Christ's help he should root it out and implant charity. As long as a man is unwilling to do this, he cannot bring forth good fruit. Moreover, since he does not produce good fruit, the Lord says of him in the Gospel: 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' If it does not please you to bring forth the sweet fruits of charity, should you not fear the fire because of the thorns of your sins? 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' As long as you do not change the root you cannot produce right fruit. Therefore, to no purpose do you promise what is good with your lips, for you cannot fulfill it as long as the root of goodness is not kept in your heart. Thus, the two farmers are wont to plant those two roots, as we mentioned above. Christ plants one in the hearts

6 Matt. 7.17-19.

of the faithful; the Devil plants the other in the hearts of the proud. Thus, one is planted in heaven; the other, in hell.

(4) But someone says: If it is planted in the hearts of the faithful, surely the faithful seem to be still in the world; how, then, is that root planted in heaven? Do you want to know how? The hearts of the faithful are heaven, for they are daily lifted up there when the priest says: 'Lift up your hearts.' Then they all reply: 'We have lifted them up to the Lord';[7] in the words of the Apostle: 'but our citizenship is in heaven.'[8] Therefore, if the citizenship of the faithful is in heaven, when true charity is in them the root of charity is planted in heaven. On the contrary, the root of avarice which is in the hearts of the proud is planted in hell, because these men always desire earthly possessions, incline toward them, love them, and place all their hope in the earth.

(5) Although this is true, proud sinners should not despair nor the humble just glory in anything as though by their own merits. If the just presume, they quickly lose the root of charity; while if sinners are converted to repentance and uproot avarice, they immediately receive the grafting of charity. Therefore, the good should preserve what they have received through God's gift, and the wicked should strive to recover what they have unhappily lost. No one should defer the performance of penance and the obtaining of sweet charity until the time when he begins to leave this life. He should not reserve himself for this, as though he will have recourse to the remedy of repentance in his old age, because he does not know 'What the day to come may bring forth.'[9] With what boldness does he put off his salvation to old age, when he cannot be certain of the space of one day? Therefore, if we do not want to fear death, we should always be ready. Then, when the Lord bids us come from this world we may

7 These are words of the priest before the Preface of the Mass and the response thereto.
8 Phil. 3.20.
9 Prov. 27.1.

come before the sight of the eternal Judge with a clear and free conscience; not with despair, but with joy. There we will happily be able to hear: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy master.'[10] May the Lord who lives and reigns in His goodness bring us to this joy.

Sermon 23

An Exhortation to Observe or Preserve Charity. That No One Can Really Excuse Himself for Not Possessing True Charity. The Addition of a Few Ideas of St. Augustine from a Sermon on Charity

(1) This fact, especially, makes us mention so frequently the value of true charity, dearly beloved, the fact that it is the special and peculiar command of the Lord Himself. Truly, nothing sweeter can be imagined, and with God's help nothing easier or more fruitful can be done. This is true in our soul if the will does not introduce something evil, for then iniquity does not know where to find a place; moreover, if 'Covetousness is the root of all evils'[1] does not apply there, charity, the root of all virtues, cannot be lacking. The first and eminent reason for divine mercy is because charity itself is diffused by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all Christians in such a way that if they wish they can continually observe it and unceasingly be satiated with its sweetness. Now, contraries are wont to be cured by contraries, and nothing is so adverse and contrary to charity, which is the foundation of all virtues, as avarice, which is the root of all evils. Since both

10 Matt. 25.21.

1 1 Tim. 6.10.

of these cannot exist together—truly, sweetness is incompatible with bitterness, light with darkness, and life with death—whoever recognizes the domination of the root of avarice in himself should implore God's aid to uproot ambition and implant charity. If anyone does this, he will fulfill all of God's precepts with joy and exultation. As often as some bitterness of the world comes upon him, the sweetness of charity does not allow it to overpower him; true charity instils the delights of all the heavenly goods in such a way that it makes him bear patiently the bitterness of earthly things. The second reason is that the burden of charity is so light that it usually does not weigh a person down but lifts him up. One who wishes to observe it with Christ's help, as he learns it from Him, will not feel any weariness from hastening on foot or working with his hands, nor will he toil in carrying heavy burdens on his shoulders. As long as a man exercises himself in difficult works with an affection of charity, the sweetness of his love does not allow him to labor, because what is burdensome for one who does not love is sweet and light for a lover.

(2) Let each one keep a good will and love all men as himself. Moreover, he should want others to be treated as he himself wishes to be treated by them. He should pray for the good that they be protected by the Lord; for the mediocre, that they may become better; for the wicked, that they may quickly be corrected. In all sinners he should hate their vices rather than the men themselves, and, like good doctors, hate the disease but not the sick person. One who hates the individuals rather than their vices in the case of sinners or enemies wants them either to be punished in the present life or burned in eternal fire in the world to come. How damnable and detestable this practice is, your pious charity clearly knows. Good Christians, however, want all their enemies to be corrected rather than lost, and in unspeakable kindness endeavor to curse neither those nor any others according to

what is written: 'Nor will the evil-tongued possess the kingdom of God.'[2] A man should never swear, because it is written: 'A man that sweareth much shall be filled with iniquity: and a scourge shall not depart from his house.'[3] What is said about a scourge not departing from his house is to be understood, not of his earthly home, but of his soul which is the temple of God. A man should also never lie, because we read: 'The mouth that belieth killeth the soul'[4] and 'thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie.'[5] Justice should be exercised according to the words, 'Blessed are they that keep judgment and do justice at all times.'[6] A man should hasten to observe chastity with his whole heart, because chastity makes men like the angels. All these facts which I have mentioned are short so that they can be remembered, and are so sweet and delightful that with God's help they should be fulfilled in deed.

(3) Realize that in all these works of true and perfect charity, as we have said, nothing is to be done with the hands or feet, so no one can attempt to excuse himself because of impossibility or infirmity. Since avarice is more distasteful than every bitterness and charity is more delightful than any sweetness, why do men want to carry the hard and harsh yoke of avarice at the cost of such great perils and labors, and shake off from their necks the sweet burden and light yoke of Christ? In reply to what I have suggested to your charity, no one can offer any kind of a plausible excuse by saying he cannot fulfill it. It is not said to him: Fast more than you can, keep vigils more than you are able; it is not imposed upon him that he should abstain from wine or meat, if the infirmity of his body does not allow it. Moreover,

2 1 Cor. 6.10.
3 Eccli. 23.12.
4 Wisd. 1.11.
5 Ps. 5.7.
6 Ps. 105.3.

if he cannot be perfect he is not compelled to sell all his possessions and give to the poor; and if he is unable to remain a virgin he is not forced to the point of not being permitted to marry. In all these matters which pertain to physical fatigue no Christian is coerced contrary to his will. One who can fulfill them should thank God; one who cannot, should practice true charity and in this he will have all things. Without those good works which were mentioned above, charity is sufficient for a man, but all those good works without charity cannot benefit him at all. I am saying all this again and again, dearly beloved, so that you may recognize more fully that no one can excuse himself for inability to fulfill God's commands. Even if he tries to excuse himself of those things in which the body labors, he cannot allege that with God's help he cannot perform any of those things in which the virtue of the soul consists; especially charity, which contains all virtues. Therefore, one who refuses to observe true charity finds nothing to attribute to others, but only to himself.

(4) For this reason, dearly beloved, keep the sweet and salutary bond of charity, without which the rich man is poor, and with which the poor man is rich. If a rich man does not possess charity, what does he have? If a poor man has charity, what does he not possess? If, as John the Evangelist says: 'God is love,'[7] what can the poor man lack if through charity he deserves to possess God? On the contrary, how can earthly wealth profit the rich man if he does not merit to possess Him? Therefore, love and observe charity, dearly beloved, for without it no one will ever see God. Do not deceive yourselves without charity, even if you have performed all the other good works; rather, fear what is written: 'Whoever keeps the whole Law, but offends in one point, has become guilty in all.'[8] What is this one point, except true and perfect charity? Concerning it the Apostle says again: 'The

7 1 John 4.8.
8 James 2.10.

whole Law is fulfilled in one word in you: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'[9] That all other works without charity avail nothing is freely proclaimed by the Apostle: 'If I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing.'[10] Since it is true charity which loves all men, if a man recognizes that he harbors hatred for even one person, he should hasten to throw out this bitter gall in order that he may merit to receive in himself sweet charity. Indeed, neither fasts nor vigils nor prayers nor alms nor faith nor virginity can help a man without charity. The Apostle advises us concerning this virtue when he says: 'Being rooted and grounded in love.'[11] Since charity is the root of all virtues, it is most clearly understood that just as a beautiful, delightful tree that is full of flowers and fruits loses its beauty if it has not a living root, so the Christian who shows the presence of other good works as though on his branches, but presumes on them without charity and refuses to have that root of charity, will remain barren without any fruit.

(5) True charity is patient in adversities, moderate in prosperity. It is strong in difficult sufferings, cheerful in good works, very secure in temptation, most pleasant among true brothers, exceedingly patient among the false, innocent in the midst of treachery, groaning amid wickedness, breathing freely in the presence of truth; chaste in Susanna toward her husband, in Anna after her husband's death, and in Mary beside her husband; humble in the obedience of Peter, free in the convictions of Paul; human in the confession of the Christians, divine in the forgiveness of Christ. True charity, dearly beloved, is the soul of all the Scriptures, the excellence of prophecy, the support of knowledge, the fruit of faith, the riches of the poor, the life of the dying. Therefore, faithfully

9 Gal. 5.14.
10 1 Cor. 13.3.
11 Eph. 3.17.

preserve it, love it with your whole heart and all the strength of your soul, continually adhere to it, for it is delightful and more pleasant than all sweetness. Its company does not entail bitterness, its conversation bears no deceit. If you are willing to observe it wholeheartedly, it will make you joyfully fulfill God's commands in this life and obtain eternal rewards in the world to come. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

*Sermon 24

A Selection from a Book by St. Augustine: How True and Perfect Charity Should Be Observed. On Love of the Members. How All Members Are of Service if a Thorn Is Stepped On

(1) We can learn clearly how we should love each other, dearly beloved, from the health and sickness of our bodily members. If we are willing to love each other as the members of our body love each other, perfect charity can be preserved in us. Consider and see what happens physically in us: how all the members rejoice when the head is well, and all the other members are pleased with each one individually. Conversely, if one member suffers some injury, all the members suffer with it. Behold, the foot has a thorn. Now, what is farther from the eyes than the foot? It is far away in position, yet very close in the affection of its charity. A thorn pricks and affects a very small area on the foot, but see how all the members turn to it. First the back bends down, and all the members devote themselves to it. Do the eyes stop looking? Do the ears cease listening? Perhaps those who see where it

is say: Behold, there it is. Immediately, the ears hear this and follow the advice; the eyes look, and the hands work there. As I said, the whole body is bent to it, and nothing in man fails to help. The wound is only in the foot, but everything in man is working. Was everything pricked? Notice. Does everything suffer pain? The hand is sound, the eyes, the head, all the other members, even the foot itself is well; pain is felt only where it is pricked. Therefore, not all the members experienced a common calamity, but through sympathetic charity all come to help and all want to give aid. Thus is fulfilled what the Apostle says: 'If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, or if one member glories, all the members rejoice with it.'[1]

(2) What then? Someone possesses the gift of God in virtues. You do not have it; do not envy, lest you be cut off from the body. See, brethren: one who envies is like a wound or ulcer or abscess. Are you unwilling to rejoice with one who has been glorified? The heavenly Physician sees in you the disease of envy, and He will cut you off from the body, so do not envy. What should you do? Rejoice. Do not say in your mind: If I were a Christian and really belonged to God I could do what another is doing. That is as if the ear would say: If I belonged to the body I could see the sun and the moon. Neither the ear nor the hand has that faculty, but each one does what it can and all the members serve each other in harmony. Therefore, do you also rejoice with the man to whom God has given some special grace, for you can do in him what you are unable to do yourself. Perhaps that man has virginity; love him, and it is yours. Again, you may have greater patience; if he loves you, it is his. Another can keep long vigils; if you do not envy him, his zeal is yours. Perhaps you can fast more; if he loves you, your fasting is his. For this reason you possess certain qualities in another; you are not thus in your own right, but by charity.

1 I Cor. 12.26.

(3) Consider, brethren, and see the example of our Lord, who made us pilgrims and commanded us to reach the heavenly City by running along the path of charity. Can anyone say that the Lord was sick here? What does it mean when He says: 'I was sick, and you did not visit me'? What does it mean, except what they themselves confess: 'When did we see thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?' Although He sits in heaven, He suffers with His toiling members, because He is the head of the members and of the whole body: 'As long as you did not do it for one of my least ones, you did not do it for me.'[2] Moreover, He was certainly in heaven when He made the preacher Paul out of the persecutor. He had compassion and incorporated him into His whole body when He said: 'Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?'[3] Was Saul, then, persecuting Him in heaven? What does it mean: 'Why does thou persecute me?' Saul was persecuting the Christians; was he persecuting Christ who was sitting in heaven? Because He was in the Christians, suffering with all the members, what He says was true: 'If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.' So, why does He say: 'Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?' Certainly I now am in heaven; however, when you persecute My least members you persecute Me, for I still suffer persecution in My members.

(4) Notice, brethren, what we ourselves often do. Observe that when people are standing and there is a crowd, if someone steps on another's foot the tongue says: You are stepping on me. Was it stepped on? Why, then, does it shout: You are stepping on me? The other might reply: You are free, O tongue, you keep your words in your mouth; if I stepped on you, it was on your foot. No, you stepped on me, charity says. You stepped on me, says the compassion of unity and the bond of association. As I began to say, all the envious who

2 Matt. 25.43-45.
3 Acts 9.4.

rejoice in the tribulations of others, especially of their enemies, should realize that they are decayed, separated, dead members and thus without any feeling. When they abandon the other members they have no feeling, because they are without sense. Our sense is one faith, brethren; our health is united charity. Let us keep faith like a sense, and let us hold on to charity like health. Although different members have different gifts, they should all be held in unity of charity, for all deserve to follow the Head. Our Head is in heaven; let us strive here to carry one another's burdens, for all the members are to go where the Head has gone. Certainly you heard us say a little while ago that the Lord exclaimed from heaven: 'Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?'

(5) I ask you, brethren, if our Lord and Saviour who committed no sin deigned to love us sinners with so much affection that He asserts He suffers whatever we suffer, why do not we who are not without sin and who could redeem our sins by charity love with such a perfect love? Then, if anyone sustains an injury we would suffer with him in loving charity, while we would accept the good of another as though we ourselves received it, and we would so rejoice, thanking God on behalf of the one who received it. Behold, as we said, someone suffers tribulation or a loss. If you grieve for him, you belong to the body of the Church; if you do not, you are cut off. For if charity, which unites and vivifies all the members of the Church, sees you rejoice at the misfortune of another, it will immediately cut you off from the body. Therefore, perhaps you do not now grieve because you have been cut off; if you were there, doubtless you would feel sad. Reflect, brethren, and carefully notice that as long as a member belongs to the body it can grieve; as soon as it is cut off, it can neither grieve nor experience any feeling. Indeed, if a hand or some other member is cut off from the body, that hand feels nothing even if the entire body is later divided into many parts, because it has been separated and

disjoined from the rest of the members. Such is the condition of the Christian who not only does not grieve, but, what is worse, perhaps even rejoices over the losses or afflictions or even the death of another. Because he is far removed from the body, he does not keep sympathetic love in his heart. However, if we want to observe true and perfect charity, let us strive to love all men as ourselves. Then, since Christ is our Head and we have deserved to be His members, when He appears in His glory, if we in harmonious charity like His true and perfect members love all men as ourselves without any deceitful malice or envy, we will merit to appear with Him in glory.

Sermon 25

A Sermon on Divine and Human Mercy: That God Permits Poor People in the World in Order That the Rich May Have a Means of Redeeming Their Sins

(1) When the Gospel was read just now, we heard our Lord and Saviour say: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'[1] Sweet is the word mercy, dearly beloved; and if the mere name, how much more so the reality? Although all men desire to possess it, what is worse, not all live in such a way as to deserve it, for all want to receive it but few are willing to grant it. O man, with what feelings do you want to find what you neglect to give? If a man desires to obtain mercy in heaven, he should bestow it in this world. Therefore, since all want mercy, dearly beloved, let us make her our patron in this life so that she may free us in the life to come. Mercy abides in heaven, but it is reached by the exercise of it on earth. Thus the Scriptures tell us: 'O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven.'[2] There is, then, both an earthly

1 Matt. 5.7.
2 Ps. 35.6.

and a heavenly mercy, the one human and the other divine. What is human mercy? It is to care for the miseries of the poor. And what is divine mercy? Doubtless, it is that which grants forgiveness of sins. Whatever human mercy gives on the way, divine mercy repays in the heavenly country. In this world God is cold and hungry in the person of all his poor, for He said:[3] 'As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.' Therefore, God who deigns to give from heaven wants to receive on earth. What kind of creatures are we if we want to take when God gives, but are unwilling to give when He asks it? If a poor man hungers, Christ is in need, as He Himself said: 'I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat.' Do not, then, despise the miseries of the poor, if you want to hope for the forgiveness of your sins without anxiety. Christ hungers now, brethren, for in the person of all the poor He Himself deigns to hunger and thirst; moreover, He repays in heaven whatever He receives on earth. I ask you, brethren, what do you desire or seek when you come to church? What, except mercy? Therefore, grant earthly mercy and you will receive the heavenly. The poor man asks something of you, and you ask of God; he seeks a mouthful, you want eternal life. Give to the poor, in order that you may merit to receive from Christ; listen to Him say: 'Give, and it shall be given to you.'[4] I do not know with what feelings you want to receive what you are unwilling to give. Therefore, when you come to church offer alms of some kind to the poor in proportion to your means. One who can should bring silver; if he cannot, let him give wine. If a man does not even possess this, he might give a mouthful to the hungry; if he has not the whole, some little portion. Thus may be fulfilled the Lord's admonition through the Prophet: 'Deal thy bread to the hungry.'[5] He

3 Matt. 25.40,42.
4 Luke 6.38.
5 Isa. 58.7.

did not say: Give all, lest perhaps you might become poor and have nothing more to give.

(2) If we carefully heed the fact that Christ hungers in the person of the poor, brethren, it will be profitable for us. God allowed poor people to be in the world in order that every man might have the means of redeeming his sins. If there were no poor, no one would give alms and no one would receive pardon. God could have made all men rich, but He wanted to assist us through the misery of the poor. Thus, the poor by patience and the rich by almsgiving may merit the grace of God. Truly, the want of the poor is of service to us. Finally, if you wisely understand and carefully weigh the balance of your heart, what you receive from the poor is incomparably greater than what you give. Listen and see: a coin and a kingdom. What comparison is there, brother? You give the poor a coin and receive a kingdom from Christ; you bestow a mouthful and are given eternal life; you offer clothes and Christ grants you the forgiveness of your sins. Therefore, let us not despise the poor, brethren, but let us desire them all the more and of our own accord hasten to lavish ourselves upon them. The misery of the poor is the remedy of the rich, as the Lord said: 'Nevertheless, give alms; and behold, all things are clean to you'; and later: 'sell what you have and give alms.'[6] Moreover, the Holy Spirit exclaims through the Prophet: 'As water quencheth a fire, so alms destroyeth sins'; and again: 'shut up alms in the heart of the poor, and it shall obtain help for thee against all evil.'[7] Therefore, let us exercise mercy, brethren, and with Christ's help keep the bond of His care as we mentioned above in the words: 'Give, and it shall be given to you'; and again: 'blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' In proportion to his means, each one should endeavor not to come to church empty-handed, for if he desires to receive he

6 Luke 11.41; 12.33.
7 Eccli. 3.33; 29.15.

should also give something. If a man can, he should cover the poor with new clothes; if he cannot, he should offer old. If a person feels incapable of this, he should extend a mouthful or welcome a stranger, give him a bed, and wash his feet. Thus he may deserve to hear from Christ: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was a stranger and you took me in.'[8] No one will be able to excuse himself from giving alms, dearly beloved, because Christ has promised a reward for a cup of cold water.

(3) As I have frequently mentioned, there are two kinds of alms: the one good, but the other better; the one that you extend a mouthful to the poor; the other that you immediately forgive a brother who has offended you. With the Lord's help let us hasten to fulfill both types, in order that we may be able to obtain eternal forgiveness and the true mercy of Christ. He Himself has told us: 'If you forgive, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses; but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses.'[9] At another time the Holy Spirit exclaims: 'Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself, and doth he ask mercy of God?'[10] Likewise, blessed John says: 'He who hates his brother is a murderer'; and again: 'he who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and he does not know whither he goes; because the darkness has blinded his eyes.'[11] Therefore, dearly beloved, in order that we may be able to avoid eternal evils and obtain perpetual good things, let us hasten as much as we can and as long as we live, both to possess ourselves and to impart to others the two kinds of alms which I mentioned above. Then we may be

8 Matt. 25.34,35.
9 Matt. 6.14-15.
10 Cf. Eccli. 28.3-5.
11 1 John 3.15; 2.11.

able to say with assurance on judgment day: Give, O Lord, because we have given; we have done what You commanded, do You fulfill what You promised. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 26

On Almsgiving and on the Heavenly Mercy to Which We Attain by Mercy on Earth

(1) When the Gospel was read, dearly beloved, among the rest of the beatitudes which divine goodness grants to men, or, rather, to good men, we heard the Lord preach the rewards of mercy. Thus He spoke: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy';[1] in another place: 'judgment is without mercy to him who has not shown mercy';[2] and again we read: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.'[3] The Psalmist likewise asserts: 'Acceptable is the man that sheweth mercy and lendeth. The just shall be in everlasting remembrance: he shall not fear the evil hearing.'[4] Surely, dearly beloved, you have heard the commendations and praise of mercy. Desire and long for it, seek it, and when you find it hold on to it tightly in this world that it may not despise you in the life to come. Every man, beloved brethren, hopes that when he comes to the day of judgment he will find mercy there. Now, if we all desire it, if all men want to find mercy in the future, let us make it our patron in this life that it may deign to welcome and defend us in the future. If we despise it in our land, how can it deign to look at us in its own?

1 Matt. 5.7.
2 James 2.13.
3 Matt. 12.7.
4 Ps. 111.5.7.

(2) Every man who knows he is going to plead his case before an earthly judge, dearly beloved, seeks useful witnesses for himself and tries to provide skilled advocates. Thus a man prepares himself when he is going to plead his case before a judge whom he can circumvent, surprise, or deceive, avert from justice by eloquent arguments, perhaps corrupt by bribes, or pervert by false praise and fictitious flattery. If a man so prepares himself to plead his case before man, how much more should we do, then, since we are going to plead our case before the eternal Judge who knows not only our actions but even our words; nay, even our thoughts and the secrets of our hearts? He does not need any witness nor does He seek arguments, for to His eyes: 'All things are naked and open.'[5] Since we are about to plead our cases before such a judge, let us make mercy our patron, so that it may deign to plead our case and even intercede on our behalf. As we read in the Psalms: 'O Lord, thy mercy is in heaven.'[6] There is the mercy which is attained by mercy on earth. Therefore, dearly beloved, let us hasten while we can to make heavenly mercy our patron in this world. Let us endeavor to love it as much as we can, and to pay it worthy honor. Let it be our advocate and our patron, as I said above. May it deign to plead our case before the tribunal of the eternal Judge, intercede for us itself, and present us to the eternal Judge. If it comes there with us, it will defend us against the Devil's accusations and lead us to eternal bliss.

(3) This is the heavenly mercy which will say on the day of judgment: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat,'[7] and so forth. What is this heavenly mercy? True heavenly mercy is Christ our Lord. How sweet and good is the mercy which of its own accord came down from heaven although

5 Heb. 4.13.
6 Ps. 35.6.
7 Matt. 25.34,35.

no one asked it, and humbled itself in order to lift us up. He was wounded in order to heal our wounds; He died to free us from everlasting death. He descended into hell to shatter the jaws and ulcerated heart of hell and to bring back to heaven the booty which the Devil had carried away. He ascended into heaven to lift our hopes on high. Who could worthily praise such mercy? Who could extol such goodness with fitting commendation? Nor was He merely satisfied to come down, taste death, and rise again for us. In addition, He promised to be with us to the end of the world, as He says in the Gospel: 'Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world.'[8] See the Lord's goodness, brethren: now He is seated at the right hand of His Father in heaven, and still He deigns to work with us in the world. He does not disdain to hunger with us, to thirst, to suffer cold, to travel, even to die or be cast into prison with us. Or is what we are suggesting perhaps not true, brethren? Let us ask the Lord Himself, and in His goodness He will deign to explain this more fully. 'I was thirsty,' He says; 'I was a stranger, I was sick, I was in prison and you came to me.'[9] See the great love with which He treats us, for He deigns to bear all those things in His ineffable charity. For that is true heavenly mercy whereby Christ our Lord made you, since you did not exist; sought you, when you were lost; and redeemed you, when you had cruelly sold yourself. Therefore, since we have been sought and found, dearly beloved, let us seek Him who loved us so much that He even graciously welcomed the death of the cross for us.

(4) But what am I saying? Let us seek Him. If only we were willing to be found by Him as we know we are daily sought by Him. He it is who said: 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'[10] Christ deigns to pour Him-

8 Matt. 28.20.
9 Cf. Matt. 25.35,36.
10 Luke 19.10.

self upon men daily, but, so much the worse, all are not willing to open the door of their heart. Why is this? Doubtless because they do works of darkness; for this reason they are unwilling to receive the light, as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel: 'Everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light.'[11] All the humble and meek who live well willingly accept the light of Christ. All who are wicked, proud, and avaricious reject Christ daily from their hearts, even with insult; what is worse, they not only reject Him but even crucify Him. Such people, the Apostle infers, are 'crucifying again in themselves Christ.'[12] Therefore I admonish you, brethren, and I beg and beseech each one of you to examine his own conscience. Since evil works repel Christ from a man, each one should with God's help cleanse whatever he finds defiled in himself. He should illuminate what is dark, restore what was lost, and with the help of Christ Himself revive by repentance what was dead. Then if Christ comes He will find a place to rest, where, as it is written, He may deign to dine and remain. Those who recognize that they have a good and pure conscience should with God's help preserve His gifts and benefits as well as they can. Moreover, they should always be solicitous lest the Devil find some approach whereby he may deceive their souls by his subtle cunning.

(5) Behold, dearly beloved, Christ comes, as I began to say before, that is, heavenly mercy daily comes to the door of your house; not only spiritually to your soul, but even physically to your home. Doubtless, Christ comes as often as a poor man approaches you, for He said: 'As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.'[13] Therefore, do not let your heart be hardened; extend a coin to Christ, from whom you desire to receive a kingdom.

11 John 3.20.
12 Heb. 6.6.
13 Matt. 25.40.

Offer a mouthful to Him from whom you expect life; welcome Him to your little lodging, that He may receive you in His paradise; give Him alms, in order that He may repay you with eternal life. With what feelings do you wish to reign with Him in heaven, when you disdain to extend alms to Him in this world? If you welcome Him in His sojourning He will receive you into His bliss, but if you reject Him here in your country He will also reject and despise you in His glory, and then will be fulfilled in you what the Psalmist says: 'O Lord, in thy city thou shalt bring their image to nothing.'[14] If in our city, that is, in this life, we consider God's image as nothing, we ought to fear that in His City, that is, in eternal life, He will reduce our image to nothing. Therefore, as I said, brethren, make mercy your patron. Then, when before the tribunal of the eternal Judge, the avaricious will hear: 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire,' this happy and desirable word may be directed to you for the generosity of your mercy: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom.'[15] May the Lord in His goodness bring you to this. Amen.

Sermon 27

On the Parable of the Elm Tree and the Vine

(1) We have proposed to us in a certain book,[1] dearly beloved, a parable of the elm and the vine. Anyone who reads it carefully will find in it much edification for his soul. For the elm tree and the vine appear sufficiently complementary to each other. Indeed, although the elm tree is

14 Ps. 72.20.
15 Matt. 25.41,34.

1 See *The Shepherd of Hermas,* trans. in *The Apostolic Fathers,* Vol. I of this series.

pleasing and stands aloft, it is shown to bear no fruit, but the vine, small and lowly, admittedly is full of fruit; however, unless this fruit is lifted on high by some tree, it withers and dies on the earth. Now, if the elm extends its branches and by lifting up the vine adorns itself, the vine is freed from decay. Let us carefully observe why this parable has been drawn. The elm tree signifies the rich man in this world. Just as that tree is lofty and pleasing and rich in moisture, yet void of fruit, so also any rich man of this world, even if he be elevated with honors and appear pleasing and delightful for many reasons, will remain without the fruits of eternal life if he does not humbly extend the arms of his alms like most devoted branches, toward the vine, that is, toward Christ's poor. The vine further signifies God's servants, abbots, monks, or devout clerics, who are absorbed in God, continually following His teaching, as well as any others who, like these despising the world, serve God both day and night. By this service men are thought to bear rich fruit in eternal happiness. Thus, the rich men of this world abound in this life and the poor of Christ in heaven. What, then, is to take place in order that the elm tree may not remain without fruit or the vine wither on the ground? This situation can result that, just as the elm tree extends its branches and raises up or supports the vine, so the rich man in this life may stretch out his branches, that is, hands full of the fruits of his field, and support Christ's poor. Moreover, if he does this in this life, he doubtless will be repaid abundantly by those same poor people in the life to come.

(2) Let not the rich man be filled with scorn or consider that he has suffered a wrong because he has been compared to a tree, but let him listen to the Lord saying: 'The good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.' And let him fear still more what follows: 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'[2]

2 Matt. 7.17,19.

Therefore, let him stretch forth his hands to give alms, in order that he may be able to escape eternal hell-fire. Let every rich man fear the example of that fruitless, barren tree, that is, the man who was clothed in purple and fine garments. For, as the tree he was pleasing and lofty in the world, but because he did not extend the branches of his mercy to Lazarus, he deserved to endure flames in hell. There he asked a drop of water from the very one to whom he had refused a crumb of bread. Therefore, let these facts be considered by the rich who are unwilling to be deprived of their goods as long as they have them. They should not act this way if they do not want to suffer a similar fate. The man we are talking about was rich; rich, too, are these other wealthy men to whom we are now speaking. They all go under the same title; let them beware of falling into the same condition. Since these are the facts, if those who are rich have shown fruitless, niggardly hands in giving alms and refuse to give the necessities of life to God's servants who are occupied in keeping vigils, reading, and praying, they are become like a sterile elm tree which neglects to support the vine. Moreover, since the rich have given nothing to Christ's poor, these latter must be exercised more than usual in earthly occupations. And while they are busy with these worldly activities they are occupied less with prayer, reading, fasting, and watching, with the result that their fruit necessarily diminishes to a certain extent, just as if it were a vine lying on the ground. Thus, they are sufficient only for their own welfare but bestow nothing upon the rich. Indeed, when the blessed Apostle Paul reminded the worldly rich of this in order to support Christ's poor, he spoke as though to a tree concerning a vine, that is, he addressed the rich on behalf of Christ's poor: 'May your abundance supply their want, that their abundance may, in its turn, make up what

you lack.'[3] In order that everyone may understand this fact, we ought to explain it more clearly.

(3) The worldly rich have an abundance of wealth in this life, Christ's poor abound in eternal life in heaven. Therefore, the rich should spend their money in this world so that they may receive eternal life in heaven. The worldly rich copiously store up grain, wine, olive oil in their granary or cellar; Christ's poor, by praying, watching, and fasting, put aside spiritual treasures in heaven. Consequently, the rich men of this world should make the servants of God partakers of their earthly wealth, in order that they themselves may become co-heirs in the heavenly treasure. When on numerous occasions the worldly rich are too much involved in earthly activities, they cannot watch or read and pray or fast as much as they should. On this account there is reason to fear that perhaps they do not offer enough reparation for their sins or do not store up as much in the heavenly treasury as they should. Christ's poor, however, by their continual devotion to God abound in these fruits. Accordingly, the rich should not be lazy in spending their earthly treasures if they desire to possess heavenly ones. Christ, indeed, who bestows His gifts on all men, condescends to suffer privations, hunger, and cold in the person of His poor. Therefore, no one should hesitate to give to the poor, for the hand of the poor is Christ's treasury; what he receives on earth he stores up in heaven. Thus also the Lord Himself has said: 'As long as you did it for one of the least of these, you did it for me.'[4] Let us listen to the Apostle when he says: 'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly';[5] and a little later: 'do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household

3 2 Cor. 8.14.
4 Matt. 25.40.
5 2 Cor. 9.6.
6 Gal. 6.10.

of the faith.'[6] Who are of the household of the faith, brethren, if not good clerics, monks, and all other servants of God who flee the hindrances of this life, are devoted to God, engaged in reading and prayer? According to our means we must give to all who ask, but to God's servants who are ashamed to ask we must give even if they have not asked. Let us then strive, dearly beloved, to act in such a way that we may be able to be spared the evil hearing. What will be that condemnation? 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat.'[7] I beg you, brethren, do not listen to this heedlessly and carelessly, but with God's help strive with all your might not to take what belongs to another. Rather, give more generously of your goods to Christ's poor, continually meditating with compunction of heart and saying to yourself: If one who does not give of his own riches is cast into hell, where do you suppose one who takes something that belongs to another will be cast? Therefore, let not that terrible, frightful word against avarice be directed to us: 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire.' May we rather, because of our charity, deserve to hear that desirable word: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink.'[8] Likewise, let that word of the Lord releasing us happily be directed to us: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy master.'[9] With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Matt.25.41,42.
8 Matt. 25.34-35.
9 Matt. 25.21.

*Sermon 28

The Beginning of an Admonition on Works of Mercy: That Two Kinds of Mercy Should Be Exercised

(1) I beseech you, brethren, to consider more carefully mercy toward the poor, and to do good works while there is still time for mercy, since the time of judgment is going to come. Could our Lord God deceive us on the subject of judgment day if He has deceived us in no other matter? Notice carefully, my brethren, and see that all the things promised to us in sacred Scripture have now almost been fulfilled. God promised there that His Son would come in the flesh, and it has happened. He promised that He would suffer, that He would rise from the dead, and it has happened; it was promised that He would ascend into heaven, and it has happened. It was promised that in His name the nations would believe, and it has happened. It was promised that in His name idols would be destroyed, and it has happened. It was foretold that crowds would separate from the Church, that heresies and schisms would originate, and lo, it has happened. Therefore, if all these promises were fulfilled, could God lie only about the day of judgment? Believe me, brethren, that is going to come to pass, too, just as all those others did. Now, God not only made Himself our debtor, but He also has written our surety. The security of His promises is read in church. Suppose He says: Why do you doubt that I shall pay the last farthing? Settle your account with Me. Let us see what I owe. Although I showed Myself a recompenser in such great matters, have I not done more than I ought in the least details? What do I owe? It is quite incredible, all that I have already done in order that My Son might share your death with you. Will He not give you His life, since He wished to share your death in common

with you? He bore your ills; will He, then, deny His good things to you? The Son of God died for us, brethren; if, perchance, you do not believe it, believe the works. What we now see was not yet before the eyes of the disciples; when they beheld Christ after the Resurrection they did not see the Church spread throughout the world. They saw the Head, but believed about the body; we see the body, so let us believe about the Head.

(2) When we consider this rather carefully, dearly beloved, let us change to a better life while the remedies are still within our power. The rich should not be proud, but should distribute alms more generously, lest, perhaps, if they refuse to give a crumb they may later long without reason for a drop of water. The poor should not despair or murmur, but always give thanks to God. They should not desire or seek to have the luxuries of the wealthy, but patiently endure their sufficiency or poverty in this world that they may merit to be lifted up with Lazarus in heaven. Let us reflect, dearly beloved, and let us fear what the Lord told us in the Gospels concerning that most vain rich man.[1] He admonishes us not to wish to imitate such things. That rich man for whom 'the land brought forth abundant crops' was ruined by his abundance more than by his poverty. 'And he began to take thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, for I have no room to store my crops?" ' When he was excited over his close straits, a plan at length occurred to him, but a foolish one, for not prudence but avarice discovered it. 'I will pull down my small old barns and build new larger ones, and I will fill them; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many good things, be satisfied, rejoice. But the Lord said to him: Thou fool, in that you seemed to yourself wise. What did you say? I will say to my soul: Thou hast many good things, be satisfied. This night thy soul shall be taken from thee; and the things that thou hast provided, whose will they

1 Cf. Luke 12.16-20.

be?' 'For what does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?'[2] Therefore, 'the ransom of a man's life are his riches.'[3] That vain and foolish man did not really have wealth, for he did not redeem his soul by almsgiving. He stored up perishable fruits; perishable fruits, I say, he stored up, along with which he, too, shall perish. If he gives nothing to the Lord to whom he is going, what will be his feeling at the judgment when he begins to hear: 'I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat'?[4] He wanted to satisfy his soul with superfluous, excessive feasting, and his pride despised the empty stomachs of so many poor people. He did not realize that the stomachs of the poor were safer than his barns. Indeed, what he put in his barns might have been taken away by thieves, but what he gave on earth, storing it up in the stomachs of the poor, was kept more safely for him in heaven.

(3) In order that with God's help we may be able to fulfill the Lord's precepts, let us endeavor to perform the two kinds of almsgiving: let us not only give bread to the hungry, but let us also promptly forgive those who injure us. We learn from our Lord's teaching in the Gospel how we should impart the remedies of true charity to our enemies, even though they do not ask it. He tells us: 'If thy brother sin against thee, show him his fault, between thee and him alone.'[5] If you neglect to do this, you are all the worse. That person did the injury and by doing so struck himself with a grave wound; are you going to scorn the wound of your brother? You see that he is perishing or has perished, and will you disregard him? By keeping silence you are worse than he was in reviling you. Therefore, when someone sins against us let us exercise great anxiety, but not for ourselves. It is noble to forget insults; so forget your injury, but not the

2 Matt. 16.26.
3 Prov. 13.8.
4 Matt. 25.42.
5 Cf. Matt. 18.15.

wound of your brother. Therefore, 'show him his fault, between thee and him alone,' continuing to correct him, but sparing him shame. Through shame, perhaps, he begins to defend his sin; then you only make him worse by wishing to correct him. Therefore, 'show him his fault, between thee and him alone. If he listen to thee, thou hast won thy brother,' for he would have perished if you had not done so. 'If he do not listen to thee,' but defends his sin as if justice, 'take with thee two or three more so that on the word of two or three witnesses every word may be confirmed. And if he refuse to hear them, appeal to the Church, but if he refuse to hear even the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.' Do not count such a man among your brothers, but still do not cease to care about the salvation of his soul. We do not consider heathens, that is, Gentiles and publicans, as our brothers, yet we are always seeking the salvation of their souls. Therefore, we have heard the Lord advising, even commanding, solicitude for them, because He adds immediately: 'Amen I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven.'[6] You have begun to consider your brother as a publican. Bind him upon earth, but see that you do it justly, for justice shatters unjust bonds. When you correct and reconcile your brother, you have loosed him on earth; when he is loosed on earth, he will also be loosed in heaven. You give much to him, not to yourself, because he harmed himself much, not you.

(4) Therefore, dearly beloved, if happily you listen and store this up in the treasury of your memory and conscience in accord with your usual pious practice, you will clearly understand how we can and should love our enemies as well as our friends. And when you have done this with Christ's help, you will shout to God in the Lord's Prayer with full assurance: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our

6 Cf. Matt. 18.16-18.

debtors.'[7] Then He who gave you security by saying in the Gospel: 'If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses,'[8] will doubtless reply: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world';[9] since you have observed well my Gospel precept, have a share in my kingdom. To Him is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end.

Sermon 29

On Charity toward One's Neighbor, and Love of Enemies

(1) From my own sentiments, dearly beloved, I know how much your charity longs for us. Although you would like to see my poor self all the time, I would wish your and my desires to be satisfied by the sight of you even more frequently if possible. However, we ought to endure with patience what we cannot remedy in view of the necessity of circumstances. Still, even if for many reasons we cannot see each other bodily, we are always united in charity and holy affection. For this reason, physical separation can do no harm if there is a true, sincere union of minds. That charity is real which is wont to unite and join people in spirit even though they are separated physically. Indeed, two people who love each other with a holy affection are so united by a binding charity that they can never be separated, even if one is in the east and the other in the west. Hear the Apostle extol true and perfect charity when he says: 'If I should speak

7 Matt. 6.12.
8 Matt. 6.14.
9 Matt. 25.34.

with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have charity, it profits me nothing,'[1] and so forth. A little later he adds: 'Charity is patient, is kind,' and all the rest. Now, although the Apostle Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, explained his preaching sufficiently, still, because charity is the sweet and salutary bond of minds, let us like little children examine it as well as we can.

(2) Great are the riches of charity, dearly beloved; without it, a rich man is poor, while a poor man with it is rich. If a rich man does not possess charity, what has he? Earthly substance of any size without charity is useless and vain; charity is full even though it possesses nothing of material wealth. If a man owns abundant riches but there is no true charity in him, he can do no good with them, for without the true mother and teacher of the heavenly virtues a man has no idea what he should do or when, and how much he should give. Let each one strive as far as he can to possess charity, so that he may have light, so that he may have oil. Charity is compared to oil: just as oil is known to be better than all liquids, so charity is evidently more noble than all the virtues. If a man has infinite riches but no charity, it is the same as if he possessed many lamps and torches without oil. If you light a lamp or torch with no oil, it can smoke and give a bad odor, but it cannot produce light. Similarly, one who possesses riches without charity can burn with anger or smoke with pride or have the foul odor of avarice; without charity, it is utterly impossible to produce light. If you possess charity, even though you have much wealth, she will know what to do with it. Charity knows best to whom to extend alms and what amount, what to give and what to hold back. She knows how much to store up for the soul in heaven and how much to reserve for the body in the world. Charity is a very good arranger, brethren; she knows well how to harvest in summer in order to have something in winter. In other

1 I Cor. 13.1,3,4.

words, she knows how to distribute alms in this life in order to find them in the life to come. Hold on to charity, brethren, because without it whatever good there is in a man avails nothing.

(3) Indeed, brethren, practice true charity. What is true charity? That which loves all men like itself. True charity it is which reaches out to enemies as well as to friends. Let no one deceive himself, brethren; if a man does not possess this charity he will not be able to see God or deserve to hear: 'Come, blessed of my Father, take possession of the kingdom.' Surely you perceive that, of all the virtues, our Lord in the Gospel lesson named none but almsgiving which works with charity. He was silent concerning the branches; He mentioned only the root when He said: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom; for I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'[2] Again the Lord says: 'Nevertheless, give alms; and behold, all things are clean to you.'[3] Every man who desires to possess charity in the future life should make it his patron in this world, and then he will find it his friend for ever. Just as a tree, however beautiful and fruitful, cannot live without a root, so no good works can endure without charity. This is what the Apostle means when he says: 'Being rooted and grounded in love.'[4]

(4) Let us possess such great charity, brethren, that we can love all men with our whole hearts. If you love all mankind as yourself, there will not remain a door whereby sin can enter into you. You close all the Devil's approaches to your soul if you love all men as yourself. Truly, brethren, how can a man injure another if he loves him as himself? Therefore love, and do what you will; love with all your heart, and practice toward your neighbor whatever you wish. If you become angry, it will be sweet because it proceeds from

2 Matt. 25.34,35.
3 Luke 11.41.
4 Eph. 3.17.

charity; if you reprove, it is kind; if you punish and even scourge, it is acceptable. Why is this, brethren? Because there is true love when you reprove and punish. Even if you throw someone out of the church, bitterness seems to rave on your lips, but kindness is preserved in your heart; you do not hate your brother as an enemy, but you punish his sin like a disease. On the contrary, there are some people who are in the habit of uttering sweet words with their lips in false flattery, while they foster deceit and bitterness in their heart. But you, dearly beloved, should hold on to true charity and avoid everything false. Listen to the Apostle when he says: 'Charity, from a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned.'[5] For my part, brethren, when I speak of charity I cannot be silent. Why? Because charity is exceedingly kind. The man who possesses it knows what I am saying, while one who does not will probably ridicule and despise me. Why does he ridicule? Because he has not tasted how sweet charity is. Therefore, let him taste and see how sweet the Lord is, for 'God is love.'[6] What is sweeter than God, brethren? If anyone does not know, let him listen to the Prophet saying what I mentioned a little while ago: 'Taste, and see that the Lord is sweet.'[7] Oh, how happy and blessed is the soul which merits to possess charity! Charity, brethren, is drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, pleasure for those placed in bitterness, true and acceptable consolation for the sad, a haven for those who are wavering, a path for the erring, a country for strangers. Therefore, brethren, hold on to it and love it with all your heart. If you are lovers, love charity; if you are strong, overcome passion; if you are strangers, desire a country. If you are willing to keep it, charity will guide you in this life and lead you to the kingdom: with the help of our Lord who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

5 1 Tim. 1.5.
6 1 John 4.8.
7 Ps. 33.9.

Sermon 30

An Admonition Showing Three Kinds of Alms by Which Sins Can Be Redeemed without Physical Labor

(1) The kind and merciful Lord, dearly beloved, deigns to provide occasions and opportunities in many ways, whereby we can redeem our sins without great labor and difficulty. Since He sees men without the strength to fast for their sins or unable to abstain from meat or wine, the poverty of the poor gives the wealthy an opportunity to sell their earthly goods and distribute them to the poor. This secures abundant fruits, for by generously bestowing their superfluities upon poor men they obtain the remission of their sins. What can be so good and delightful, so easy and ready at hand, dearly beloved, as to strive to redeem your sins by giving alms out of what God has deigned to give you more than you need? God does not command you to spend what is necessary for yourself or your family, for of this the Apostle says: 'I do not mean that the relief of others should become your burden.'[1] God does not need to spend your superfluities on Himself, but He wants to keep them for you in eternal bliss. Indeed, He wanted the poor to be so in order that the rich might have a means of redeeming their sins. God could have made all men rich, but he wanted to provide the rich with an opportunity for showing mercy. Not for their own merit do the few rich gain more than they need and the many poor people not acquire even what they need. This is the cleverness of divine mercy, as I said before, so that while the poor patiently bear their poverty they may obtain forgiveness of their sins, and the rich, in turn, while they mercifully distribute their superfluities, they may redeem their offenses and attain eternal rewards.

1 2 Cor. 8.13.

(2) Consider, dearly beloved, and see that no excuse can remain whereby we say that we could not have redeemed our sins. Perhaps you can say that you are unable to afflict your body with fasting and vigils, or that you cannot abstain from wine or meat. But can you say that whatever God has given you more than you need you cannot give to the poor for your sins? Perhaps you will reply and say: With the extra amount God has given me I want to buy silver and to provide precious ornaments for my children. To such a man I respond: You buy ornaments, indeed, but you do not redeem your sins. Now, not only are the tithes which we possess not ours but destined for the church, but whatever we have received from God more than we need should be distributed to the poor. If, then, we reserve for our pleasures and vanities what was assigned to them, we will have to render an account on judgment day for the souls of as many poor people as have died through hunger or nakedness in the places where we are.

(3) There is still another kind of alms whereby we may redeem our sins without any physical labor. Even if a man is so poor that he does not possess any gold or grain or wine or oil to give material alms, it is impossible that he will not sustain any injury from men so that he may wholeheartedly forgive all his enemies. Thus, no sin will remain to gnaw at his conscience, and he can say with assurance in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[2] Then will be fulfilled in him what Christ deigned to promise in the Gospel: 'If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses';[3] and: 'give, and it shall be given to you; forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'[4] Understand, dearly beloved, that in this just as in that other kind of almsgiving which we mentioned before, no one can excuse himself or give the reason that he cannot fulfill

2 Matt. 6.12.
3 Matt. 6.14.
4 Luke 6.38,37.

it. This alms whereby we forgive those who injure us is not offered from the cellar or granary or shrine, but from the treasury of the heart. Of this the Lord Himself says: 'The good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things.'[5] Many poor people can excuse themselves from giving those things which we mentioned before—gold, silver, grain, wine, and oil—but with what boldness or what kind of a conscience will any man say he cannot possess the alms which is bestowed from the heart?

(4) Therefore, since we have no reason to excuse ourselves, the man to whom God has given more than he needs should redeem his sins out of his superfluity. If a man is unable to redeem captives or feed and clothe the poor, he should not harbor in his heart hatred for anyone. Not only should he fail to return evil for evil, but he should love his enemies and not cease to pray for them. Thus he may be sure of the promise and mercy of our Lord, and with a clear conscience he can say before the tribunal of Christ: Give, O Lord, because I have given; forgive, because I have forgiven. However, there remains the condition that after he has begun to redeem his sins by such alms, since slight offenses are never wanting to him, which he may redeem daily, a man should not commit serious sins. According to what is written: 'He that washeth himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him, again, what doth his washing avail?'[6] and: 'as a dog that returneth to his vomit is hateful, so is the sinner that returneth to his sin.'[7]

(5) Now, while we are suggesting these two kinds of almsgiving, someone may say: Behold, I possess no earthly substance to give to the poor, nor do I suffer any injury which I can forgive and thus redeem my sins; what am I to do, since I do not have these things and still cannot fast from

5 Matt. 12.35.
6 Eccli. 34.30.
7 Cf. Prov. 26.11.

wine or abstain from meat? If anyone says this, I could tell him that what he claims is false. In this world no one can be found who never suffers injury from another. However, let us grant his assertion; let us still be satisfied that we will show him a third kind of alms which so precludes all excuses that no one can be found to oppose it. Behold, you have said that you do not acquire abundant profits whereby you might provide food and clothing for the poor. Further, you do not sustain injuries which you should forgive your enemies. Therefore, you are in doubt because you do not possess the means of redeeming your sins. Then learn and faithfully observe the admirable and excellent third kind of alms. Have good will, love all men as yourself, pray for everyone, and desire the same thing for them as for yourself, in order that the angels may proclaim to you: 'Peace to men of good will.'[8] Since good will itself is charity, if you wish to possess it the following will be fulfilled in you: 'Charity covers a multitude of sins.'[9] Realize, then, that all your excuses and contradiction are removed. Indeed, you cannot say that you are unable to possess good will; it is possible for you not to be willing, but you can never prove it is impossible.

(6) Let us strive not to accept such great benefits and such excellent remedies of our Lord and Saviour with negligence, but with His help let us endeavor faithfully to observe them. Thus we will not only merit to receive pardon for our sins, but even to arrive at eternal rewards. This admonition on the two kinds of alms which were mentioned second and third is so clear that it does not need any explanation. By the first we forgive those who injure us, praying for our enemies and loving them with our whole heart; in the second we try to make God propitious to us through good will and charity which 'covers a multitude of sins.' However, the alms we first mentioned you can with

8 Cf. Luke 2.14.
9 1 Peter 4.8.

God's help perform with joy and gladness, if you are willing to heed my advice. By it we can, under the Lord's inspiration, both redeem our sins and procure eternal rewards with whatever God has given us more than we need. Whenever you gather the harvest or vintage, calculate your expenses and those of all who pertain to you and include what you will put into your purse. Then, of what remains, because it was not really given to you, as was already said, but was transmitted to you for distribution among the poor, set it all aside or as much as God inspires your heart to give. The result thus will be as though you had put it in God's hand. If, as we believe, you are willing to do this devoutly, your soul will not only not be exasperated and saddened by the captives and poor who come to you, but will even rejoice and be glad. With the greatest willingness you will bestow what you set aside for the necessities of the poor out of love for God, and there will be fulfilled in you the words: 'God loves a cheerful giver,'[10] and: 'he that giveth to the poor shall never want.'[11] Likewise: 'As water quencheth a flaming fire, so alms resisteth sins';[12] and as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel: 'Nevertheless, give alms; and behold, all things are clean to you.'[13] May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 31

According to St. Salvian, with Much Compunction: On Almsgiving

(1) I have warned your charity, dearly beloved, and

10 2 Cor. 9.7.
11 Prov. 28.27.
12 Cf. Eccli. 3.33.
13 Luke 11.41.

have presumed to give you advice on almsgiving. Although by God's inspiration our admonition has been profitable to many, I fear that there are some who give less than they can or perhaps nothing at all. Someone may say: I am poor, therefore I cannot give alms. In order that no poor person might be able to excuse himself, our Lord and Saviour promised to reward a cup of cold water. Then you say: I am poor. If you have nothing more in your earthly substance than what is sufficient for you in reasonable, moderate food and clothing, good will alone can suffice for you. However, I ask you to question your conscience carefully, lest, perhaps, you sometimes lose in drunkenness what you might have acquired and given in alms. You may gluttonously strive to waste on earth what you should have stored up in heaven. Perhaps because we procure delights, prepare luxurious ornaments, and provide a larger weight of silver than is necessary, we do not have something which we might be able to spend on the poor as a remedy for our souls. Furthermore, while our precious clothes are often destroyed by moths, the poor may not even merit to receive our superfluous garments. Now, if all these hindrances do not weigh down our soul and we have only enough for ourselves and our family, we will not appear guilty if we do not distribute alms to the poor. However, as I already said, if luxury frequently consumes what mercy might have put in the heavenly treasury, let us correct our lives while there is time. Let us endeavor with all our strength to fulfill what we have not done up to now or perhaps have done less than we should.

(2) If we work for the body, dearly beloved, let us also work for our soul. If we hasten for the body, satisfy it, adorn it, even though in a few years worms will devour it in the grave, how much more should we not disdain our soul which is presented to God and the angels in heaven? Let us consider, brethren, that when the body is satisfied with abundant delights and corrupted with too much wine, the nourishment

of dissipation is served and the food of worms provided. I beseech you, brethren, look at the graves of the rich, and as often as you pass them reflect and carefully see where their riches are, where their ornaments, rings, earrings, precious diadems, the vanity of honors, the pleasure of dissipation, their mad or bloody or shameful spectacles. Certainly they have all passed like a shadow, and, unless repentance came to the rescue, only endless reproaches and crimes have remained. Consider more carefully and behold the graves of the proud; realize that nothing has remained in them but only ashes and the stinking remains of worms. Notice this carefully, man, and say to yourself, tell yourself: O miserable soul, that man once ran after pleasure and was a slave to lust while he lived in this world; see, nothing now is left of him but stinking, horrible dust. If you are willing to listen, man, those dry bones can preach to you. The dust of another cries out to you from the grave: Why, unhappy soul, do you run about so much for the sake of worldly pleasure? Why do you bend your miserable neck to pride and dissipation? Why do you surrender yourself to the service of exceedingly cruel masters, that is, to your vices and sins? The dead shouts to you from the grave: Look at me, and recognize yourself; consider my bones, and so let your dissipation and avarice shudder for you. What you are, I was; what I am, you will be. If vanity remained in me, do not let iniquity consume you; if dissipation corrupted me, let chastity adorn you. See my dust, and abandon your evil desires. With these words, then, the dead shouts to us from the grave. Therefore, with the Lord's help, let us strive as hard as we can that the wounds of others may bring us health, and that the death of those who are lost may be profitable for our salvation. However, this is the best thing that can happen, if we are more solicitous for our soul than for our body, so that, when our flesh has begun to be devoured by worms in the grave, our soul, adorned with good works, may be taken up into heaven by the angels. If concupiscence

of the flesh deceives us, we will suffer the double destruction of soul and body, for, while the body rots in the grave, our soul will suffer torments in hell. Behold the preaching which the ashes and bones of the dead daily proclaim to us.

(3) Therefore, Christian soul, as you hear and read these things be assisted by the advice of holy Daniel when he says: 'Accept my counsel, and redeem thou thy sins with alms.'[1] If you do not willingly hear this advice, you will knock at the door of heaven in vain. O soul which dwells within frail walls of flesh, be vigilant, pray, seek, ask, knock. Be vigilant, I repeat, by seeking, pray by asking, knock by working. If you are vigilant and seek Him the Lord will answer you and say: 'Here I am.'[2] If you pass through fire the flame will not burn you, for the Lord is with you. 'As water quencheth a fire, so alms destroyeth sins.'[3] Therefore, if you open your hands to the poor, Christ will also open to you His doors so that you may enter as the possessor of paradise. If, perchance, you think that the end of the world will come later, at least consider your end. Behold, the world fails little by little; all the good things that existed are withdrawn; evils which did not exist now come. Every day what God's word predicted is fulfilled, and still man is not changed. Therefore, take our advice while you still have your ransom in your hands. Give to yourself out of your own riches while they are yours, because what you possess is fragile and what you care for belongs to others. Consider the price your Lord paid for you: He shed His own Blood. He considered you precious, for He bought you at such a dear price.

(4) Avoid the example of the rich man who was clothed in purple, brethren, whose dogs were appeased by the wounds of Lazarus although he did not receive a crumb from the table of the rich man. After not such a long time their places

1 Dan. 4.24.
2 Isa. 58.9.
3 Eccli. 3.33.

were changed: the poor man bought happiness with his indigence, the rich man bought punishment with his wealth. Lazarus was lifted up to Abraham's bosom by the angels; Dives was brought to the depths of hell. From his position the rich man saw the poor, or, rather, the now poor man saw the rich. He who had refused a crumb now longs for a drop of water. Therefore, the rich who are unwilling to redeem themselves with their wealth should reflect, lest they suffer something similar. The man of whom we are now speaking was rich; rich, too, are those we are now addressing. They all come under the same title; let them beware of falling into the same condition. The rich man clothed in purple and Lazarus with his sores exchanged places: the rich man lost what he had, the poor man began to be what he was not. The rich man had left full storerooms in the world, and in his burning fever he asked a drop of water in hell, but could not obtain it. Notice, brethren: the entire body of the rich man is consumed in the flames of hell, but his tongue alone is specially tortured. Doubtless, he feels more intense flames in his tongue, because by speaking haughtily with it he had despised the poor. That very tongue which had refused to say alms should be given to the poor is burned more severely in the flames of hell. He shouted, saying: 'Father Abraham, send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue.'[4] O rich man, with what boldness do you ask a drop of water, when you refused to extend a crumb? You could justly demand it now if you had given something. O goods of the world which are evil in hell! Fire came to serve the rich man, and torturers to obey him in his cruelty. He endures the harsh attendants of hell. He is tormented and shouts: O just and innocent judge, these punishments are now balanced against my sins! If only I might suffer evils doubly or even fourfold for the time in my life when I had good things! Why do you hold me bound in fire for so many thousands of years?

4 Luke 16.24.

I am tied with the fetters of my sins, so that I cannot escape. Minute by minute I am pricked so that I feel pain. The fire rages in me, yet spares me; it tortures, but preserves me; it does not punish all of me, but is cruel when it does not. After these doleful words, it doubtless might be replied: What can I do for you? You did not give alms which might extinguish the punishment for your sins. Scripture shouted to you, but you did not listen; the Prophets were not silent, the Apostle preached, the Gospel thundered. The punishment of the wicked was announced, the reward of the just promised again and again. While you thought you could hold on to the shadows and clouds of this world, you rejected the divine precepts as foolish tales. Let the poor intercede in your behalf, and I will grant whatever you ask. However, by a just judgment I recompense you, for 'Judgment is without mercy to him who has not shown mercy.'[5] My justice can give you nothing except what your works deserve. To no purpose do you cry out, now that you are dead and in the power of another, for when you had opportunities and saw Me in the person of the poor, you were blind.

(5) My brethren, formed by the hand of God and bought together with me at a precious price, heed the advice of our Lord God and fulfill the wish of your bishop, so that with him you may receive an inheritance in the kingdom of your father. From a slave you have become a friend; disregard your being born and regard your being reborn; fulfill your destiny with Christ. Since He has prepared eternal rewards for you, why should He not receive a part of your earthly substance? Why should He not receive tithes, since He has conferred the whole? In exchange for an earthly inheritance God offers heaven, for He says:[6] 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom, for I was hungry and you gave me to eat.' If you faithfully and generously give alms, then you will

5 James 2.13.
6 Matt. 25.34,35,37,40.

happily be able to say: 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty, and ministered to thee?' What is this that the faithful debtor does while the creditors excuse themselves? Then the Father, your Lord and friend, with whom you have made a heavenly bargain, will reply to you: 'As long as you did it for one of the least of my brethren, you did it for me.' I do not deny that I received; I repay. I took earthly possessions, I requite with heavenly ones; I received transitory things, I will restore eternal ones. I took what belonged to me, I now give you Myself. I will grant an eternal reward and a kingdom on the right side, not because you have not sinned, but because you have redeemed your sins with alms. I beseech you, brethren, that this admonition, or, rather, our advice, may be received in your souls and so profit you in your earthly pilgrimage that before the tribunal of the eternal Judge pardon may be granted to me for my kind admonition, and eternal glory bestowed on you for your generosity in almsgiving: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ to whom is honor.

Sermon 32

An Admonition to Those Who Frequently Give Alms, but Still Commit Robbery and Adultery Every Day

(1) I beseech you, brethren, carefully reflect so that you may dread as much as you can and be on your guard lest the cruel Enemy of the human race overtake you, as he commonly deceives the careless and negligent with his wicked cunning. He instils such a foolish security in murderers, robbers, and adulterers that although they commit sins every day they believe that they redeem them by daily almsgiving. They suppose that God accepts a bribe after the custom of

corrupt judges and forgives their sin. To be sure, He accepts the gift and is pleased with the alms, but only on condition that the sinner also offer his soul when he gives his money to God. But I ask you, brethren, where is the justice in a man insultingly giving God money in almsgiving while handing his soul over to the Devil in avarice? In the money he offers God the image of the emperor, but in himself he gives the Devil the image of God. This is not what the Lord commanded in the Gospel when He said: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'[1] What else did He seem to say except that, just as you give Caesar his own image in the coin, so you should give God His image in yourself? If a man gives generous alms but does not turn away from serious sin, I fear, and fear greatly, that deceiving himself with a false security he will both lose his money and fail to redeem his sins. Therefore, no one should think that daily alms counteracts his daily adultery.

(2) It is one thing to change one's life; another, to cover it. To change one's life means to refrain from serious sins; to cover it over means to redeem the slight offenses, without which we cannot live, by daily alms. Then, indeed, as I already said above, more generous alms free the soul, if the sinner abandons his deadly vices. However, if, as was said before, a man gives his earthly substance to God but offers his soul to the Devil, there is fulfilled in him what is written: 'He that washeth himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his washing avail?'[2] The Apostle Peter likewise exclaims:[3] 'If after escaping the defilements of the world they are again entangled therein and overcome, their latter state has become worse for them than the former.' Consider, brethren, blessed Peter's testimony to

1 Matt. 22.21.
2 Eccli. 34.30.
3 2 Peter 2.20,22.

sinners that, if after they have begun to redeem their sins they return to the slough of vice, their latter state becomes worse than the former. What the same Apostle Peter adds also refers to such people: 'A dog returns to his vomit, and a sow even after washing wallows in the mire.' This fact Solomon warns us about more clearly and in more terrible words: 'As a dog that returneth to his vomit is hateful, so is the sinner that returneth to his sins.'[4] The Lord confirms this in the Gospel when He says: 'Behold, thou art cured. Sin no more, lest something worse befall thee.'[5] Again, Solomon gives testimony of the same truth: 'My son, hast thou sinned? Do so no more: but for thy former sins also pray that they may be forgiven thee.'[6] Clearly, this was said concerning serious sin, not the slight offenses without which we cannot live. For this reason it is written in the Gospel: 'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through waterless places in search of a resting place, and finds none. After this he returns and finds his house which he left swept. Then he takes seven other spirits more evil than himself; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.'[7] This is what happens to people who try to redeem serious sin by almsgiving but return again to the same vices; just as the alms cleanses their soul, so dissipation defiles it. Indeed, if a man frequently washes his garments but repeatedly dips them in mud, I do not know how he can wear them on a feast, especially since the Apostle says concerning Christ: 'He prepared for himself the Church, not having spot or wrinkle.'[8] If no one can enter eternal life with a spot or wrinkle, with what kind of a conscience does the man who is overwhelmed with serious sins expect to

4 Cf. Prov. 26.11.
5 John 5.14.
6 Eccli. 21.1.
7 Luke 11.24-26.
8 Eph. 5.27.

enter, unless he cleanses himself by amendment of life and the distribution of alms?

(3) Carefully heed what I am saying, dearly beloved, lest someone perhaps misunderstand and think I mean that almsgiving cannot benefit the sinner. Far be it from us, brethren; not only do we admit that it is helpful, but it is very much so. The condition is, however, that the one who distributes alms for his sins should cease to commit such grave offenses, and at the Lord's bidding give alms in such a way that he disdains to be a slave to sin. I would like to mention to your charity a comparison on this subject. I ask you, brethren, would any one of us like his servant to repay the wages he receives for his labors by continually serving our enemies and never leaving their companionship? I am sure I know no one who could tolerate it. Therefore, it is not right for you to do to your Lord what you are unwilling to suffer from your servant. Thus, when we give money to the poor, let us offer our soul to God, as we have often mentioned before, so that where our treasure is there our heart may also be. Why does God ask us for money? Surely, because He knows that we love it very much and continually think about it, for where our money is there is our heart. God, moreover, exhorts us to store up treasures in heaven by alms for the poor, so that our hearts may follow whither we have sent ahead our treasure. Then, when the priest says: 'Lift up your hearts,'[9] we may with a clear conscience reply that we have lifted them up to the Lord.

(4) Now, someone may say: I am young; I cannot overcome my passions and conquer lust. If you cannot control yourself, listen to the Apostle when he says: 'It is better to marry than to burn.'[10] Since it is lawful to marry but unlawful to have concubines and commit adultery, why do you want to do what is unlawful and refuse the lawful?

9 One of the prayers of the priest before the Preface of the Mass.
10 1 Cor. 7.9.

No one should avoid what is unlawful more than the man who rejected what was lawful. Now I tell you truly, brethren, that according to God this never was, is not now, and never will be lawful. What is worse, those sins have become so habitual and such important people commit them that they are believed to be permissible. If no man wants his wife to practice adulterous concubinage before marriage but all men want to marry virgins, with what daring, with what kind of a conscience, do they not blush to have concubines before marriage? How can a man want his wife to be chaste, when he himself is defiled? If, according to sacred Scripture: 'The soul that sinneth, the same shall die,'[11] how can anyone want to marry a person that is alive when he himself is dead? Now, as I already said, this pernicious and worst habit is cultivated by many men without any fear of God, with the result that it is not even considered a sin. Perhaps someone will say that it is lawful for men but not for women, because the number of those doing it has made it lawful for men. However, for Christians whatever is unlawful for women is not, never was, and never will be lawful for men. Therefore, I beseech all who realize they have done this not to become angry at me, but at themselves. Let them think more about correcting themselves than of contradicting or persecuting us, so that when judgment day comes they may obtain the remission of their sins even if they do not merit to receive a crown.

Sermon 33

On Paying Tithes: Before the Nativity of St. John the Baptist

(1) Through Christ's goodness, dearly beloved, the days

11 Ezech. 18.20.

are almost here when we should gather the harvest. With thanksgiving to God who has given, let us consider the question of offering or, rather, paying tithes. Our God who has deigned to give us all condescends to ask of us in return tithes which doubtless will benefit us, not Himself. Thus He has promised through the Prophet, saying: 'Bring all the tithes into my storehouse that there may be meat in my house: and try me in this, saith the Lord, if I open not unto you the flood-gates of heaven, and give you fruits even to abundance.'[1] See, we have shown you how the tithes benefit us rather than God. Besides, it is written elsewhere: 'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world and all they that dwell therein.'[2] If, therefore, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, we are His servants and farmers, and I do not know how we can fail to recognize Him as the owner. Again, He says: 'The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib: but Israel hath not known me and my people hath not understood.'[3] O foolish man, what evil does God command, that He does not deserve to be heard? Thus He speaks: 'Thou shalt not delay to offer to me the first-fruits from thy threshing-floor and winepress.'[4] If it is a sin to delay paying, how much worse is it not to give at all? Again, He says: 'Honor the Lord thy God with thy just labors, and give him of the fruits of thy justice; that thy barns shall be filled with grain, and thy presses shall run over with wine.'[5] Now, you do not freely give what you will immediately receive again with much interest. You ask, perhaps, who will profit by what God accepts, when He is going to return it. You ask, again, who will benefit by what is given to the poor. If you have faith, it benefits you; if you doubt, you have lost it. Indeed, dearly beloved, tithes are the tribute

1 Mal. 3.10.
2 Ps. 23.1.
3 Isa. 1.3.
4 Cf. Exod. 22.29.
5 Prov. 3.9,10.

of souls that are poor. Give contributions to the needy, present offerings to the priests. If you do not possess the tithes of earthly fruits as the farmer does, whatever your talents procure for you belongs to God. He asks for tithes from the source of our livelihood. Pay tithes of military service, business, or a trade. We pay one thing for material goods, the other for the enjoyment of life. Therefore, O man, acknowledge the fact that you have possessions, the fact that you merited to be born. Thus speaks the Lord: 'Each one will give to God tithes and the first-fruits for the redemption of their souls, and they will not suffer disease or disaster.'[6] Behold, you have in sacred Scripture your Lord's security, whereby He promises you that if you give tithes you will not only receive an abundance of fruits, but will also obtain bodily health. 'Thy threshing-floors shall be filled with grain, and thy presses also shall run over with wine. And they will not suffer disease or disaster.'[7] Since by the payment of tithes you can merit earthly and heavenly gifts, why do you cheat yourself of a double blessing through avarice?

(2) Listen, then, impious man. You know that everything you receive belongs to God; will you not give the Creator of all things something of His own? The Lord God is not in want; He does not demand a recompense, but honor. He does not require you to pay back something of yours. He asks the first-fruits and tithes, and do you refuse? Avaricious man, what would you do if He had taken nine-tenths for Himself and left you the tithes? Surely, this already happened when the meager harvest failed because your blessing of rain was withdrawn, or when hail struck your vintage or frost killed it. Why does this happen, greedy calculator? The nine-tenths were taken from you because you refused to pay tithes. The fact remains, of course, that you did not give it, but God exacted it. This is our Lord's ex-

6 Exod. 30.12.
7 Prov. 3.10; Exod. 30.12.

ceedingly just practice. If you deny Him the tithes, you are brought down to it. As it is written:[8] 'Thus speaks the Lord: Tithes of your field and the first-fruits of your land are with you. I see you, and you think you are deceiving me. Within, in your treasure and in your house, there will be plunder.' You will give to a wicked soldier what you are unwilling to give to the priest. 'Be converted even now, says the Lord almighty: that I may open unto you the flood-gates of heaven, and pour you out my blessing; and the fruits of your land shall not be spoiled, nor shall the vine in your field grow weak, and all nations shall call you blessed.' God is always ready to do good, but man's wickedness prevents it, because he wishes that everything be given him from the Lord God, but is unwilling to offer anything of what he seems to possess. Now, suppose God should say: Of course you are Mine, man, for I made you. Mine is the earth which you cultivate, Mine the seeds you sow. The animals which you work are Mine; Mine are the rain and showers, the blasts of the winds are Mine, Mine is the heat of the sun. Since all the elements of life are Mine, you who only put your hands to them deserve merely tithes. Now, although almighty God kindly feeds us and gives an ample reward to man for his little labor, He claims only tithes for Himself and gives the whole to us.

(3) Ungrateful cheat and fraud, with the divine voice I summon you. Behold, the year has come to the end; repay the Lord who gave you your increase. Redeem yourself, man, while you still live; redeem yourself while you can. Redeem yourself, I repeat, while you have the price in your hands. Redeem yourself, lest greedy death overtake you and you lose at the same time both your life and your wealth. Without reason you leave this to your wife, for she will probably have another husband. Without reason you leave this to your husband, O woman, for he doubtless will take another

8 Cf. Mal. 3.8-12.

wife without delay. In vain do you lavish your attention upon relatives and friends. After your death no one will piously redeem you, since you refused to ransom yourself during life. Remove the weight of avarice from your necks, despise that cruel mistress which burdens you with a heavy yoke and does not permit you to take up the yoke of Christ. Just as the yoke of avarice usually forces a man down into hell, so Christ's yoke raises him up to heaven. Tithes are duly demanded. If a man withholds them, he attacks the possessions of another. Before the tribunal of the eternal Judge a man will appear guilty of as many murders as the number of poor people who have died of hunger where he lived, because he refused to pay tithes, for he reserves for his own use the possessions assigned to the poor by our Lord. Therefore, if a man wishes to obtain a reward and to merit the forgiveness of his sins, he should be eager to pay tithes and to give alms even from the remaining nine-tenths. With the exception of moderate food and reasonable clothing, the rest of the nine-tenths should not be set aside for dissipation, but should be stored in the heavenly treasury through alms given to the poor. Whatever God grants us that is more than we need He does not give to us in particular, but through us He transmits it to be distributed to others. If we refuse to be generous, we attack the possessions of another.

(4) We desire to celebrate joyfully the nativity of St. John the Baptist, just as we do the other feasts that come around. Since that illustrious feast is coming soon, let us all observe perfect chastity and honesty the several days preceding, in order that we may be able to celebrate the feast with joy and may merit to approach the Lord with a clear and upright conscience. I beseech and adjure you by the dreadful day of judgment to admonish your neighbors, your household, and all who are related to you, and to reprove them severely out of zeal for God. Let no one on the feast of St. John dare to bathe in the fountains or marshes or rivers either at night or

early in the morning; that wretched custom still remains from pagan observances. Although not only souls but, so much the worse, bodies very frequently die as a result of that impious bathing, people who are unconcerned over the salvation of their soul do not even fear bodily death. However, we trust in God's mercy that through your reproofs very few or practically no one will dare to commit this evil any more. We likewise admonish you, brethren, not to allow your household to sing shameful, dissolute songs which are opposed to chastity and upright living. Indeed, it is not right for a mouth into which the Eucharistic Christ enters, to sing dissolute love songs. If you willingly listen as you usually do, and with Christ's help strive to fulfill this, you will joyfully celebrate the feasts of the saints with a pure heart and chaste body in this world, and in the life to come you will happily obtain their companionship: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon 34

A Sermon on Love of Parents, and on Giving Tithes

(1) As we read the Prophets, dearly beloved, we find the Lord advising us always to love and honor our parents, and if it happens that they are distressed by poverty, we should relieve their necessities as far as we can. Truly we read: 'If thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not the members of thy own seed.'[1] Here the members of our seed are to be understood as our parents. Now, someone may say: Who would hate his parents, that the Lord through His Prophet warns us as concerning a great matter? Doubtless, the Holy Spirit knew, brethren, that when some men attain

1 Cf. Isa. 58.7.

honors or riches which they have sought everywhere they despise their poor parents so much that they even refuse to look at them. Anyone who does this should not doubt that he has committed sin, and a serious one. It may even happen that through riches and pride a man commits great sins and faults, while his parents in their poverty retain humility, simplicity, and justice. With what kind of a conscience does such a man disdain to care for his innocent, good parents, when he is a wicked sinner? Therefore, if anyone is wealthy while his relatives are poor, he should first provide for their necessities, and then distribute alms to poor strangers. Indeed, if you do not give to the rest of the poor someone else will, but, if you are not generous to your poor parents, it is difficult for another to give liberally to them.

(2) The just and proper order of almsgiving is that first you should provide for yourself and your family sufficient, moderate food and clothing, but nothing rich or luxurious; secondly, as I said, you should generously give whatever you can to those of your relatives who are poor; and, thirdly, you should not allow your servants and maids to be hungry or cold. Whatever God has given you beyond this, except your food and clothing, you should not store up in earthly treasure 'where thieves break in and steal,' but in heaven, so that 'where thy treasure is, there thy heart also may be.'[2] Then, when the priest says: 'Lift up your hearts,' we may reply with confidence and in truth: 'We have lifted them up to the Lord.' With the exception of moderate, reasonable food and clothing, whatever God has conferred upon you as the result of military service or agriculture He did not give to you in particular, but He transmitted it through you to be spent upon the poor. You know that, if you are unwilling to give, you take away what belongs to another because, as I said, only what reasonably suffices for ourselves and our family is really ours.

2 Matt. 6.19,21.

God has sent everything over and above that for distribution among the poor.

(3) Now, we ought not give merely tithes, but should distribute faithfully and transmit to others whatever remains of the nine-tenths after we have paid taxes and taken care of our expenses. If we do this, what we give is truly ours; if we do not, what we hold back is not ours, nor will we who seem to cling to it be our own masters. Moreover, brethren, I do not understand with what feelings we do not even offer tithes of the whole amount we have received. If God wanted to balance the account He might say: I made the earth which you are cultivating; you who cultivate it and your servants I created; I made the animals which help you cultivate; the heat of the sun I give, and I dispense rain at the proper seasons; when you sow, I even give you seed to scatter. If you will settle a just account, you ought to keep one-tenth for yourself and give Me nine-tenths. This I do not ask, for I want to be merciful. I am furnishing you an example, so that you may have pity on the poor just as I have pity on you. If God wanted to settle a just account with us, brethren, is there anything we could say in reply? Although He admonishes us on this subject in many places of Scripture, God especially proclaims it in warning through the Apostle's words: 'Having food and sufficient clothing, with these let us be content. But those who seek to become rich fall into temptation and a snare of the devil and into many useless and harmful desires, which plunge men into destruction and damnation. For covetousness is the root of all evils, and some in their eagerness to get rich have strayed from the faith and have involved themselves in many troubles. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; but pursue justice, godliness, faith,'[3] and the rest. I ask you, brethren, if we are silent concerning the rest of the Scriptures, is not this one thought of the Apostle enough for a Christian? Indeed, if a man does not arise from the sleep of avarice at the

3 1 Tim. 6.8-11.

sound of such thunder, we must consider him, not asleep, but dead.

(4) Therefore, brethren, because due to the frailty of our flesh we are continually tormented and pricked by many sins like flies buzzing around, let us hasten to the haven of God's mercy in the midst of the storms and tempests of this world. Perhaps someone will ask how he can arrive there. Let him hear Christ saying: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy';[4] and later: 'give alms, and behold, all things are clean to you.'[5] According to the Apostle's thought which we ought to keep always before our eyes, if we want to escape from the sea of this world we should be satisfied to have a reasonable amount of food and clothing, but nothing rich or luxurious. If God grants us anything further we should not refuse it to the use of the poor, for through us it clearly is transmitted to them. If we do not relinquish what is superfluous we attack the possessions of another. Moreover, as many poor as have died through hunger with our knowledge will testify against us before the tribunal of Christ.

(5) Since there are two kinds of almsgiving, one whereby we give to the poor and another whereby we forgive our neighbors or brothers as often as they injure us, let us with God's help perform both, because one cannot benefit us without the other. If you extend alms to the poor but do not pardon a person who injures you, it is of no avail. Contrariwise, too, if you forgive those who wrong you but refuse to give the needy whatever you can, the one cannot benefit you without the other. Now, brethren, let us provide these two kinds of almsgiving for ourselves as the oarage of spiritual wings. Thus despising the desire for earthly possessions, unimpeded by and freed from them, we may happily be able to fly on the wings of virtue like spiritual doves and reach

4 Matt. 5.7.
5 Luke 11.41.

the royal country of that heavenly Jerusalem. This is what the Psalmist longs and prays for when he says: 'Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?'[6]

(6) It is certain, brethren, that, unless each one strives to free the wings of his soul from the glue of sin and the excessive hindrances and snares of the world, he can never arrive at true rest. Although even with God's help we cannot entirely remove the impediments of the world from our hearts, let us strive as much as our strengh permits to control or cut off some of them, so that we may have a few hours to devote ourselves to reading and prayer. If earthly preoccupations wholly distract us, it must be feared that the following may happen to us: 'The burdens of this world have made them miserable.'[7] With the Lord's help let us rather strive for the fulfillment in us, at least in part, of what is written concerning the just man: 'On the law of the Lord he shall meditate day and night.'[8] May the Lord in His mercy deign to grant this to your holy charity, to whom is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 35

On the Lord's Prayer and Love of Enemies

(1) As often as we celebrate any sacred feasts, dearly beloved, and prepare to receive Holy Communion, you know with what disposition we should come. Before we come, you are well aware of what we should first say to God in prayer: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[1]

6 Ps. 54.7.
7 The source of this quotation is unknown.
8 Ps. 1.2.

1 Matt. 6.12.

See to it that you grant forgiveness, for you will come to those words in the prayer. How are you going to say them? Or will you, perhaps, not do so? Finally, I ask: Are you saying them or not? You hate your brother and say: 'Forgive us as we also forgive.' You will answer: I do not say them. You pray, and do not say them? Listen, and pay close attention. Soon you are to pray; grant forgiveness from your heart. Do you want to quarrel with your enemy? First quarrel with your own heart. Say to your heart: Do not hate. If you still feel hatred, say to your soul: Do not hate. How shall I pray? How shall I say: 'Forgive us our debts'? This we can say, indeed, but how are we to say what follows: 'as we also forgive'? Where is your faith? Faith derived its name from what happens. What you say is to happen, too: 'as we also forgive.' You are unwilling to forgive, and your soul is sad because you are telling it to hate nothing. Say to it, in turn:[2] 'Why art thou sad?' Do not ruin me by hatred. 'Why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God.' You grow faint, you pant, you are wounded with grief, you cannot remove the hatred from your heart. 'Hope in God.' He is the Physician. He hung on the cross for you and still is not an avenger. Why do you want to take vengeance? For that is why you bear hatred, in order to get revenge. Look at Him hanging on the cross and with His Blood effecting a cure for you in your weakness. Do you want revenge? Look at Christ hanging there and listen to Him pray: 'Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.'[3]

(2) However, you say to me: He could do it, but I cannot; I am a man, He is God. If you cannot imitate Christ, why did the blessed Apostle Peter say: 'Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you an example that you may follow in his steps'?[4] And why did the Apostle Paul exclaim:

2 Ps. 41.6.
3 Luke 23.34.
4 1 Peter 2.21.

'Be you imitators of God, as very dear children'?[5] Moreover, why did our Lord Himself say: 'Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart'?[6] To plead in our own defense we say that we cannot do what we are completely unwilling to do. It is true that we cannot imitate Christ in all things. You cannot imitate Him in raising the dead to life and performing other virtues, but you can imitate Christ in meekness and humility of heart. Be kind and merciful; possess true charity; love not only your friends, but your enemies. If you do this you will follow in the footsteps of your Lord. Do you still say that you cannot fulfill any of those things I mentioned—being kind and merciful, observing chastity, and loving all men as oneself? Indeed, if we only set our minds to it, we can do all of them with God's help. When a man comes before the tribunal of Christ it will be utterly impossible to make excuses, for no one could know our capabilities better than He who gave them to us. Moreover, God who is just could not command the impossible, and in His goodness He will not condemn a man for what was unavoidable. Now, if we say that we cannot fulfill Christ's commands, we assert that He gave orders that were too harsh and impossible of fulfillment. It would be better to say in all humility with the Prophet: 'Thou art just, O Lord: and thy judgment is just.'[7] Thou art good, we are wicked; Thou, merciful, we, hard-hearted. When we say this let us pray with our whole heart that He may give us the ability to carry out His commands.

(3) Now, all those things which I mentioned before, dearly beloved—to scorn the desires of this world, to observe perfect charity toward all men, to love not only friends but also enemies—can be accomplished with God's help, provided that we try to uproot from our hearts unlawful desires, the

5 Eph. 5.1.
6 Matt. 11.29.
7 Ps. 118.137.

mother of all vices. Indeed, when the root is removed all the branches are at once reduced to nothing. If we pay close attention, brethren, we see in truth that, although natural needs are taken care of by small, insignificant things, the frenzy of desire is never satisfied by any gains or possessions. The greater the abundance of things, the more the need of them increases. To be sure, we see some people who have little money rejoice in small gains. Later on, however, when they begin to have an abundance of silver and gold, if you offer them something small they now refuse it. You would think they were already satisfied, but that is false. A larger amount of money does not close the jaws of avarice, but stretches them still wider; does not give pleasing moisture, but kindles the flame. They refuse a cup because they thirst for a river. Therefore, is a man to be called richer or poorer if he wants to possess things so as not to feel any need, but has them only to need them still more?

(4) Truly, the fault does not lie with the silver and gold. Let a kind man find a treasure. Through the prompting of kindness is not hospitality offered to strangers, are not the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the needy helped, captives ransomed, churches built, the weary refreshed, the contentious appeased, those who have suffered shipwreck repaired, the sick cured, material wealth distributed on earth, and spiritual riches stored up in heaven? Who does this sort of thing? The good, kind man. With what? Silver and gold. Whom does he serve? The One who said: 'The gold is mine, and the silver is mine.'[8] Behold, you have heard what good arises from gold when a good man possesses it. On the other hand, let gold be in the hands of an evil man and see what great harm he does. He oppresses his inferiors, constantly torments his neighbors in order to rob them, corrupts the courts, provokes quarrels and scandals, despises the lowly, looks down upon his parents, loves dissipation, scorns chastity and mercy.

8 Agg. 2.9.

How does this happen? Because gold was given to a wicked man. Thus, by abusing God's gifts he will receive judgment from what might have been a source of remedy. In the words of the Apostle James: 'Come now, you rich, weep and howl over your miseries which will come upon you. Your riches have rotted, and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you, and will devour your flesh as fire does.'[9] Know well, dearly beloved, that riches cannot harm a good man because he spends them kindly; likewise, they cannot help the wicked as long as he keeps them avariciously or wastes them in dissipation.

(5) Therefore, dearly beloved, let us learn to love God with our whole heart, and let us begin to love all men as ourselves. If we do this, no strife over earthly possessions, no scandal, no quarrels will be able to separate us from the love of God and of our neighbor. Indeed, how will it be possible for anyone to do wrong if he loves all men as himself with perfect charity? Love all men with your whole heart, and do whatever you wish. Love those who are just because they are good, and pray that they will ever become better. Love also those who are wicked because they are men, and hate the fact that they are evil. Moreover, always desire that God in His goodness may convert them to good works. If, then, you long to possess the riches of perfect charity, you will consider the pleasures of earthly desires as nothing. Truly, what does the rich man have if he does not possess charity? Or what does the poor man lack, if he possesses charity? Therefore, let us seek after the riches of charity with all our might. If by God's gift we have merited to obtain them, let us despise the riches of this world as filth. Then we will happily arrive at eternal bliss where there are true riches, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and power.

9 James 5.1-3.

Sermon 36

On Love of Enemies

(1) In the sacred books, dearly beloved, the Holy Spirit has so arranged it that spiritual ornaments are not able to be lacking for the healthy, and remedies for the sick. Recognizing this fact, under the Lord's inspiration I have endeavored to provide for you the unique and special remedy of souls as a spiritual antidote. For this reason I gathered a few flowers as well as I could from the delightful branches of sacred Scripture, to provide remedies for the sick, as I said, and to provide very precious pearls from the heavenly treasury to heal the wounds of sins. The first and principal remedy for the soul that is sick is to preserve sweet charity, whereby it is possible to love enemies as well as friends. Therefore, we have chosen as well as possible a few thoughts from both the Old and New Testaments of Scripture, on fraternal love of enemies. Here we see how the devout Christian may believe, remember, observe, and with God's help fulfill in deed this excellent charity. If anyone accepts our words on faith without discussion, he will receive pardon for his sins and with the assistance of God arrive at the bliss of eternal life.

(2) First of all, we must consider and imitate with all our strength the charity of the saints of old toward their enemies. What great charity there was in blessed Jacob, for he preferred to flee to distant lands from his brother who hated him rather than repay with hatred. Not knowing how to hate, he did know how to escape his brother; later, he returned and honored him with many gifts, thus appeasing him. Again, we must notice how kind was the charity of blessed Joseph toward his enemies: in return for the crime of murder he did not requite his wicked, hostile brothers with bitter hate

but sweet charity. Indeed, he kissed them one by one, and wept over them one by one. Without repaying them with any evil, he even restored good things, loving them always with the love of their living father and dead brother. Moreover, when the rebellious people often wanted to stone as well as despise Moses, mindful of divine charity he prayed to the Lord for them, exclaiming: 'If thou forgive not the sin of thy people, strike me out of the book that thou hast written.'[1] Even in the Old Testament we find it written: 'The paths of the wicked who remember an injury are unto death';[2] 'be not mindful of the injury of thy neighbor';[3] and again: 'if thou see the ass of thy enemy lie in the mire, thou shalt not pass by unless thou first lift him up.'[4] At this point, each one should diligently consider that if it is not right to leave the ass of an enemy in the mud, how much more should we not hate or disregard a man who is made to the image of God? Blessed Job also faithfully observed true and perfect charity even toward his enemies, so that he could rejoice and say to the Lord with a clear conscience: 'If I have been glad at the downfall of my enemy, and have rejoiced that evil had found him, or have said in my heart: It is well.'[5]

(3) Moreover, although blessed David was adorned with many virtues, no action united him more closely to God than his love for enemies. His enemy cursed him to his face, yet he preferred to spare him and reserve him for the judgment of God rather than satisfy his own wrath. So true and unfeigned was his love that he wept for his very adversaries, and punished anyone who dared to kill them. Thus, he could say with assurance what all men ought to say with attentive, trembling souls: 'If I have rendered to them that repaid me evils, let me deservedly fall empty before my

1 Exod. 32.32.
2 Prov. 12.28.
3 Lev. 19.18.
4 Exod. 23.5.
5 Job 31.29.

enemies. Let the enemy pursue my soul, and take it, and tread it down, and bring down my glory to the dust.'[6] See to what kind of a curse a man condemns himself, if he despises God's commands concerning love of enemies and does not fear to foster hatred in his heart. Therefore, we ought to consider with what boldness or with what kind of a conscience a man can utter that verse, if he repays his enemies evil for evil. Through Solomon, too, the Holy Spirit proclaims: 'When thy enemy shall fall, be not glad, lest God see, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.'[7] Surely, if the Lord turns His anger away from that man, He will direct it against the one who rejoices in the calamity of his enemy, according to the words: 'He that rejoiceth at another man's ruin shall not be unpunished.'[8] On the same subject we read: 'Man to man reserveth anger, and doth he seek remedy of God? He hath no mercy on a man like himself; he that is but flesh nourisheth anger, and doth he ask forgiveness of God? Who shall obtain pardon for his sins?'[9]

(4) Indeed, it is recorded in the Old Testament: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and shalt hate thy enemy.'[10] However, if a man wants to grasp the meaning of the sacred writing with sound comprehension, he understands the sentence in this way: He should love every man as his friend and hate the Devil as his enemy. This can be fulfilled in an evil man, for in the person who is bad you have both a neighbor and an enemy. Because he is a man he is your neighbor; because he is evil he is not only your enemy but also his own enemy. Therefore, love the body and soul in him, that is, your neighbor created by God; hate the evil which the Devil introduced with his consent. If you do this with a devout and

6 Ps. 7.5,6.
7 Prov. 24.17,18.
8 Prov. 17.5.
9 Eccli. 28.3-5.
10 Cf. Matt. 5.43.

pious mind, you will act like a heavenly doctor who hates the disease but loves the sick man.

(5) The Holy Spirit speaks in the same manner through Solomon: 'If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat: if he thirst, give him to drink; doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.'[11] At this point we must watch carefully, lest, perchance, we make wounds out of the remedies for us if we do not understand it well. Some people are even inclined to take this precept as if to satisfy their wrath. Indeed, they say within themselves: Behold I will feed my enemy, so he may burn for ever. May God keep an idea of this sort far from our minds! This point ought to be accepted as the saints and ancient fathers have explained it under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. 'If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat,' and so forth; 'for by doing this thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' The head in man is understood as his rational sense, and when this sense withdraws from the heat of charity and becomes cold, as it is written: 'Because iniquity has abounded, the charity of many will grow cold,'[12] it is necessary that he know what is contrary to his salvation, and that he be an enemy to whom he ought to have been a friend. Therefore, the Holy Spirit urges men who are holy and burning with the fire of charity to cure such a madman, for He says: 'Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' When you piously do good to your enemy, however wicked and cruel, savage and unfeeling he may be, he at length sometimes blushes and grieves, beginning to repent of what he has done. Then, when he has begun to do penance, his rational sense, that is, his head, begins to be kindled with the fire of charity. One who before was inclined to harbor wrath against you like a cold maniac now begins to love you with his whole heart through being kindled with spiritual warmth arising from your kindness. See how the holy Fathers

11 Prov. 25.21,22.
12 Cf. Matt. 24.12.

have said this point of Scripture is to be understood. Far be it from the mind of a Catholic to try to bestow some good on his enemy with the intention of wanting the other person to be burned in eternal fire for this kindness. Therefore, we should consider it with great precautions of faith, and should fear that we may follow the killing letter instead of loving the vivifying spirit.

(6) With great fear, dearly beloved, we ought to consider what the Holy Spirit said terrifyingly in the psalm. When He summons the heavenly Jerusalem, that is, the congregation of all the saints who will reign with Christ, to praise the Lord and says: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem,' He adds: 'who hath placed peace in thy borders.'[13] Therefore, as you see, that heavenly Jerusalem has walls made of peace. If a man possesses such peace and charity that he loves all men, praying for the good that they may become better and for the wicked that they may quickly correct themselves, he will merit to find the doors of the heavenly Jerusalem open, on whatever side he wishes to enter. However, if a man is unwilling to possess such charity as Christ preached and the Apostle taught, he will find the doors of Jerusalem closed on all sides. Because he refuses to keep the oil of charity, when the doors of the bridegroom are closed, together with the foolish virgins he will hear that dreadful word: 'Amen I say to you, I do not know whence you are.'[14] Just as the heavenly Jerusalem will open its doors to the five virgins who had the oil of charity, so that they may enter into the joy of their Lord, so on the contrary it will close them to those who come without charity and repel them in an endless separation. Then will be fulfilled what is written in the psalm concerning that Jerusalem: 'Because he hath strengthened the bolts of thy gates.'[15] When the doors are closed and the bolts tightened,

13 Ps. 147.12,14.
14 Matt. 25.12.
15 Ps. 147.13.

no friend will ever depart and no enemy will ever be able to enter; for, as the just will never leave their glory, so also the sinner will never be able to be freed from punishment.

(7) Therefore, if we want the divine Goodness to deign to free us from those evils so that we may happily deserve to enter the heavenly Jerusalem, let us labor with all our strength that what the Apostle said[16] may be fulfilled in us: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or danger, or the sword?' Also, that further word: 'For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Behold, just as you have heard, such great and terrible things could not separate the blessed Apostle and apostolic men from the charity of God. For this reason it is deplorable that, although they could not be separated from the charity of God even by torments, we are sometimes separated by idle tales. Moreover, because of a very slight insult and the slander of some miserable man we abandon charity to such an extent that we do not speak to him for many days, perhaps even months and years, and refuse to come to the same banquet. Furthermore, we do not notice that when we hate someone we close the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem against ourselves, so that no approach remains for us through which we may enter. Since that City has God as an inhabitant, and in the words of John the Evangelist, 'God is love,'[17] with what boldness and what kind of a conscience will a man presume to approach Him who is Charity, if he has refused to observe it?

(8) When I frequently repeat these things to you with paternal devotion, dearly beloved, I absolve my conscience in God's sight. Because there will be no one who can truly

16 Rom. 8.35,38,39.
17 I John 4.8.

excuse himself for inability to observe true peace and charity, let us pray God's mercy with all our strength that He may deign to bestow and instil in us that charity without which no one will ever see God. May we never be separated from His love or pleasure by any torments or losses or persecutions. If you wish, there is no need for us to weary you any more with a longer sermon; what we have said at present may suffice for your charity. With God's pleasure you may now like clean animals chew over what you have heard by holy thoughts, and determine how with his assistance you can fulfill them in your souls. Then, what follows on love of enemies you will more conveniently hear without physical weariness, either tomorrow or, certainly, on Sunday: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory world without end. Amen.

Sermon 37

On Love of Enemies

(1) I know and believe that your charity wisely understands that it is not without reason that I admonish you so often concerning the true and perfect charity. I do this because I realize that there is no medicine so salutary and efficacious for the wounds of all sins. Added to this is the fact that, although the remedy of true and perfect charity is so great, no one is found who could not possess it with God's help. In other good works one sometimes may offer an excuse of one sort or another, but in possessing love no one can excuse himself. Someone may say to me: I cannot fast. Is there anyone who can say: I cannot love? He may say: Because of my bodily infirmity I cannot abstain from wine or meat. Can anyone say: I cannot love? He may say he cannot observe

virginity, sell all his goods and give to the poor. But can anyone say: I cannot love my enemies and be indulgent to those who have sinned against me? Let no one delude himself, beloved brethren, because God fails no one. Indeed, although there are many things which we cannot do because of human weakness in a physical sense, with God's help we doubtless can, if we honestly wish it, possess charity in our hearts. There are many things which we often cannot give out of our granary or storehouse or cellar; but with regard to the treasure of our heart it is mean and disgraceful if we seem to offer any excuse. For in doing this our feet are not wearied in running, our eyes in seeing, our ears in hearing, or our hands with working, so that we may attempt to excuse ourselves on the grounds of fatigue. It is not said to us: Go to the east, and look for charity; sail to the west, and you will find love. Rather, we are bidden to return within our own hearts from which anger usually shuts us out, as the Prophet says: 'Return, ye transgressors, to the heart.'[1] As I have already said, what the Lord repeatedly asks of us is not found in distant lands; He sends us within, into our own hearts. For He has placed within us that which He wants, in which consists the perfection of charity in the will and goodness of soul. This will and goodness the angels proclaimed to the shepherds: 'Peace on earth among men of good will.'[2] Therefore, because we will be able to offer no excuse before the tribunal of Christ, let us strive with all our might with God's help that goodness may prevail in our hearts more than wickedness, patience more than anger, kindness more than envy, humility more than pride; and—to end this whole discussion briefly—the sweetness of charity will take possession of our whole heart in such a way that bitter hatred will be able to find no room in us.

(2) But someone says: I cannot in any way love my

1 Isa. 46.8.
2 Luke 2.14.

enemies. In all of holy Scripture God has told you that you can, but you reply to the contrary that you cannot. Consider, now, whether God or you should be believed. Therefore, because truth cannot lie, let human weakness now abandon its vain excuses. He who is just could not command the impossible, nor is He who is pious likely to condemn a man for something unavoidable. Why do we uselessly pretend? No one knows our capabilities better than He who gave them to us. Consider the many men and women, illustrious boys and delicate girls, who calmly endured flames and fire and swords and wild beasts for Christ. Then can we say we cannot endure the reproaches of foolish men? Sometimes, in return for very slight losses which we incur through the malice of the wicked, we avenge our wrongs, if possible, even to the death of their perpetrator. Therefore, I do not know with what countenance or conscience we desire to have a share in eternal beatitude with all the saints, for we do not consent to follow their example in even the least matters.

(3) Moreover, there are some people who think that the testimony of the Scriptures is a defense against the divine wrath. They say that it is written: 'My soul loves one that loves it,'[3] so that while they incorrectly understand the divine authority, they wound themselves with the remedy. Let your charity heed how this should and could be understood. 'My soul,' it says, 'loves one that loves it.' Although this should be felt toward men according to the letter, it should more certainly be understood concerning God, because no one loves us better than He does. If, indeed, only the good are to be loved, what will we say concerning God, about whom it is written: 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son'?[4] What good had the world done that God should love it so? Christ our Lord indeed came to all men, not only the wicked, but also those who were dead through

3 Cf. Prov. 8.17.
4 John 3.16.

original sin. But, even though we were such, 'He loved us and delivered himself up for us.'[5] In this way He loved even those who did not love Him, as the Apostle Paul says: 'Christ died for the wicked.'[6] With unutterable devotion He gave this example to the whole human race, saying: 'Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'[7] The same command is given by the blessed Apostle Peter: 'Christ also has suffered for us, leaving you an example that you may follow in his steps.'[8] What example of the Lord are we to follow? To revive the dead? To walk on the sea? Not at all; but that we be meek and humble of heart; that we love, not only our friends, but also our enemies. It says: 'That you may follow in his steps.' Likewise, blessed John the Evangelist says: 'He who says that he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk just as he walked.'[9] How did Christ walk? When stretched upon the cross He prayed thus for His enemies: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'[10] Our enemies indeed are mad and possessed by a contrary spirit, so that in order to persecute us they suffer a still greater persecution from the Devil. For this reason we ought to pray that they will be freed rather than condemned. Thus, indeed, acted blessed Stephen, who was the first gloriously to follow Christ's example. When he was struck with showers of hard rocks he stood up and prayed for himself, and then, falling upon his knees in front of his enemies, cried out with all his strength: 'Lord Jesus Christ, do not lay this sin against them.'[11] If, then, we think that we cannot imitate our Lord, let us at least imitate our fellow servant. Let us also imitate blessed James, who likewise, when

5 Eph. 5.2.
6 Rom. 5.6.
7 Matt. 11.29.
8 Cf. 1 Peter 2.21.
9 1 John 2.6.
10 Luke 23.34.
11 Acts 7.60.

he was stoned by the Jews, fell upon his knees and prayed for his persecutors.

(4) In the Gospel, too, our Lord did not give us counsel, but a command, to love our enemies. Counsel is one thing; a command, quite another. Counsel is given to observe virginity, to abstain from wine and meat, to sell all one's goods and give to the poor; but a command is given to observe justice, to avoid evil and do good. Finally, it is said of virginity: 'Let him accept it who can.'[12] Concerning justice, however, it is not said: Let whoever can, do it, but: 'Every tree that is not bringing forth good fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire.'[13] Anyone who willingly listens to counsel and fulfills it will possess great glory, but anyone who does not fulfill a command cannot escape punishment unless he has recourse to repentance. Thus the Lord has commanded:[14] 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you.' Moreover, if you ask what reward you will receive, listen to what follows: 'So that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.' Notice that if we do not love our enemies, we cannot be sons of God. Now with what kind of a spirit do we say in prayer:[15] 'Our Father who art in heaven'? Or with what kind of a conscience can we say: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors'?

(5) And still someone says: I hear one repeating the Scriptures: 'My soul loves one that loves it.'[16] Do you love your children and parents? So does a robber love, a lion loves, so a dragon loves, bears love, and so do wolves love If, then, we do not love those who love us, if we despise our children or parents, we are worse than lions and the above-mentioned beasts. Moreover, if we love only those who love

12 Matt. 19.12.
13 Matt. 3.10.
14 Matt. 5.44,45.
15 Matt. 6.9,12.
16 Cf. Prov. 8.17.

us, we apparently are in no way different from the very animals. Just as our Lord Himself said: 'For if you love those who love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans do that? And if you salute your brethren only, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do that?'[17] Therefore, as you see for yourselves, those who love only their friends in this respect are still like the publicans and pagans. In order, then, that we may be superior to the pagans and animals, let us love also our enemies and adversaries. Let us, then, fear what the Lord said in the Gospel:[18] 'Wicked servant! I forgave thee all the debt, because thou didst entreat me. Shouldst not thou also have had pity on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?' And furthermore: 'He handed him over to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So also,' says the Lord, 'my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brothers from your hearts.' In another passage of Scripture the Lord Himself says:[19] 'By this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' And again: 'This is my commandment, that you love one another.' Still another quotation reads: 'Whoever keeps the whole Law, but offends in one point, has become guilty in all.'[20] What is this one thing, unless what we said above: 'A new commandment I give you, that you love one another'? What, I repeat, is this one thing, unless what the Apostle says: 'The whole Law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'?[21] However, lest, perchance, anyone say that this passage is not to be understood thus, let him hear the Apostle again crying out with glorious words concerning this command: 'And if I deliver my body to be burned, yet

17 Matt. 5.46,47.
18 Matt. 18.32-35.
19 John 13.35; 15.12.
20 James 2.10.
21 Gal. 5.14.

do not have charity, it profits me nothing.'[22] It is genuine, true charity which extends, not only to friends, but even to enemies, just as our Lord is admitted to have such love for the human race that He allows His rain to fall and His sun daily to rise, not only upon the good, but even upon the wicked.

(6) Above all, we ought to recall and remember with great reverence and fear what the Lord said in the Gospel: 'If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses.'[23] The Apostle preaches the same thing when he says:[24] 'To no man render evil for evil. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.' Likewise: 'Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'; and again: 'not rendering evil for evil, or abuse for abuse, but contrariwise, blessing.'[25] Blessed John the Evangelist, too, who leaned on the Lord's breast, thus admonishes us in his Epistle:[26] Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer. And you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.' Furthermore: 'He who says that he is in the light, and hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and he does not know whither he goes; because the darkness has blinded his eyes.' In this way we ought to receive everyone as a brother. Blessed John further says: 'If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar. For how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see?' However, this discourse is long enough. There are, indeed, innumerable passages, in both the Old and the New Testaments, which seem to confirm by the strongest evidence the matter about which we are speaking. It would take too long, though, to

22 1 Cor. 13.3.
23 Matt. 6.14,15.
24 Rom. 12.17,14,21.
25 1 Peter 3.9.
26 1 John 3.15; 2.9,11; 4.20.

bring them all to the ears of your charity. Holy souls accept even small things as great because in reality greater quantity will never be able to profit one whom small things profit, but great things do not profit. For this reason, dearly beloved, considering what has already been said a number of times, that 'The whole Law is fulfilled in us in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,'[27] love not only your friends, but also your enemies. If anyone is unwilling to fulfill this, other good works will not be able to benefit him. Therefore, forgive all your enemies in such a way that you may be able to say with a clear conscience in prayer: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[28] May He deign to grant this, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 38

St. Augustine on Love of Enemies as Well as of Friends. That It Is Possible for Our Enemies to Be Recalled to Friendship in Such a Way That They Become Better Than Those Whom They Seemed to Persecute, a Fact Which Is Clearly Fulfilled in the Blessed Apostle Paul

(1) Frequently in the Gospel, dearly beloved, we have heard the Lord say: 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.'[1] Why did the Lord say: 'Love your enemies,' except because we would have to suffer them? Someone says: Who can love his enemies? Formerly, your God who never was wicked loved you when you were; even if you are not wicked now, you were at some time or other. There is no just man but was a sinner, as we frequently chant: 'Blessed

27 Gal. 5.14.
28 Matt. 6.12.

1 Matt. 5.44.

are they whose iniquities are forgiven.'[2] We do not say: Blessed are they who have committed no sin, but 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.' If you look for someone who has not committed any, you will not find him. How, then, will any one be blessed? He will if his sin is forgiven, if what he has committed is covered. If your sin has already been pardoned, the person who is attacking you is not yet just. You, too, persecuted others before you were justified; you were lost, and you have been found. The one who opposes you will also be found, and then he will not trouble you. Do not imagine that you have become as you are through your own merits, because God's grace made you so. If you consider well, you will perceive that God is powerful and that He made the one whom you seem to yourself to hate justly.

(2) As though you are just, you say to yourself: Great is God's patience which allows such a man to live. If only you said merely this much! But I am afraid you blame Him besides when you say: Why is God pleased to spare such men? Can men do such evil, and still live? Someone else says: O God, why does that man live, when he says such things and censures your justice? He does not notice what he is saying, but pays attention to what another is doing. Perhaps the man who displeases you does not rebuke God or hurl such insults at Him as you are doing. Consider that God, like you, wants to spare no evil; what will He do with you who cannot exist without sin? Do you not see where He will find you? Therefore, ask Him not only to spare others, but yourself, too. This, brethren, is the inherent quality all the wicked possess: they do not want God to spare the unjust, but they do not realize what they are themselves in this very matter that they desire. But I am just, you say. If God had not spared you when you were unjust, how would you have attained justice? Or did you, perhaps, want God to be

2 Ps. 31.1.

patient with you until you would arrive at a state of justice? Since God extended the bridge of His mercy so that you might cross, do you now want Him to withdraw it so that another cannot?

(3) Therefore, dearly beloved, let us love our enemies. Perhaps the man who is your friend today will commit such sins that he cannot be with you in eternal life, 'For thou knowest not what tomorrow may bring forth.'[3] On the contrary, your enemy may be converted to repentance in such a way that he merits to be your fellow citizen in that heavenly Jerusalem; in fact, he might even become greater than you. This should not seem difficult to you. Let us examine the Scriptures, and in them we will be able to understand this more clearly. At first, the Apostle Paul was a wicked enemy of the Christians; he carried them off, plundered their property, and raged. He was present the time the martyr Stephen was stoned. His hands did not touch the martyr, but he stoned him with the hands of all. He kept everyone's garments so they would not be impeded by them and could throw the rocks with free hands, and thus he committed the crime in the hands of all. See how at one word of the Lord he became a preacher instead of a persecutor. He surpassed those whom he had hated, for not all the Christians he persecuted were such as he became. Not even all the Apostles were what he became. So, you see, it is possible for one who is your enemy today not only to be your friend and brother in grace, but even to surpass you and become better.

(4) Dearly beloved, do you not think that all those Christians whom Saul persecuted prayed for him? Certainly, if they knew Christ and were Christians, if they realized that the Lord Jesus Himself died for sinners. He did not die for the faithful, but He died to make the faithful. I beseech you, brethren, listen carefully. What is it that our Lord and

3 Cf. Prov. 27.1.

Saviour, who offered His death for unbelievers, reserved for the faithful? Consider, further, that those whom the Apostle Paul was persecuting knew well the mercy of God. They understood that Saul the persecutor could become a preacher, and so they prayed for him, and their prayers were heard. He was pursuing, but they overcame him; rather, they killed him and did so by praying for him. How? Behold, with one word the persecutor is thrown to the ground. When he arose he was no longer a persecutor, but a preacher; the persecutor was dead. Look for the persecutor but you will not find him, because he has risen. Therefore, they overcame him by prayer more than he did with his persecution. Do you, also, brethren, pray for your enemies that God may overcome them, that is, that He may slay their wickedness which is hateful to you. Thus, God will not kill what He created, but what they themselves made for themselves. 'Man' and 'a sinner' are two names; in these two names look for what God created and what the Devil caused by his persuasion. Man was made by God; sin was originated by man upon the Devil's advice. Which of the two persecutes you? Indeed, if you lead a good life, no one persecutes you except the evil man; therefore, not man, but a sinner, troubles you. Pray for the man, that God may destroy the sinner. When the sinner is dead he will not oppose you; in fact, he who persecuted you when he was dead in sin will comfort you when he is alive.

(5) I implore you by the mercy of our Lord that this be not difficult for you, for we have no other hope but in forgiveness of the injury men have done to us. Let no one deceive us: we owe no other greater sacrifice to God than to do good to men, even to the wicked. God says to you: I do not grow because of you, but you do because of me. I want a sacrifice that will benefit man, and thus I will receive what will be for your good. You may say: I have nothing to give to the needy; I cannot fast frequently and abstain from wine

or meat. Can you tell me you cannot practice charity? That it is whose possession increases in proportion as it is spent. Let go of what you were clinging to, lest He in whom you have nothing to forgive may hold something against you. 'Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you.'[4] Realize that there are two kinds of alms, dearly beloved: one of the heart, the other of money. Alms of the heart is to forgive whatever injury you have suffered. Sometimes you look for something to give to the poor and have nothing; but forgive the sinner as often as you will, and it always comes back to you. It is possible that at times you will not have gold, silver, clothing, grain, wine, or oil to give to the poor. However, you can never excuse yourself from loving all men and doing to others what you want them to do to you, even forgiving your enemies. If you have nothing in the cellar or the granary to give, you can offer something from the treasury of your heart. Now, since good will, and that alone, suffices for all men, and alms of the heart is much greater than material alms, who could offer the shadow of an excuse? Notice this, brethren: the alms of charity without earthly wealth is enough, but an alms which is given materially but not with a kindly heart is not at all satisfactory. As you see, dearly beloved, charity and the love of enemies are sufficient and more than enough to obtain the remission of sins, even if earthly riches be lacking. Therefore, we will have no excuse in the matter on the day of judgment. No one will be able to say that he did not have the means of redeeming his sins.

(6) For this reason let us endeavor to love all men with our whole heart, praying that the good may become better and persevere in good works, and that the wicked may quickly amend their lives. Let us fear the Lord's threat when He said: 'If you do not forgive men their offenses, neither

4 Luke 6.37,38.

will your Father forgive you your offenses.'[5] However, with His help let us strive still more for the fulfillment in us of the words: 'Give, and it shall be given to you; forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'[6] According to the Lord's statement which we mentioned before, 'If you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses,'[7] we have in our power the criterion by which we shall be judged on the day of judgment. Let us forgive all our enemies, so that we may be able to say with a clear conscience in the Lord's Prayer: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[8] May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 39

An Admonition Explaining That the Good and Merciful Lord Has Placed in Our Power the Criteria by Which We Will Be Judged on the Last Day; That Love of Enemies Is the Only and Exclusive Remedy against the Wounds of All Sins; That No One Can Ever Truthfully Say He Is Unable to Love His Enemies

(1) Knowing that the human race with its weaknesses cannot pass through this present life without sin, the good and merciful Lord deigned to provide such remedies as not only the rich, but also the poor, can apply to the wounds of their sins. What are these remedies? They are two, concerning which the Lord said: 'Give, and it shall be given to you;

5 Matt. 6.15.
6 Luke 6.38,37.
7 Matt. 6.14.
8 Matt. 6.12.

forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'[1] 'Give, and it shall be given to you' refers to the alms which are given to the hungry, the naked, and captives. 'Forgive, and you shall be forgiven' indicates the alms whereby we forgive all our enemies. Even if a poor man wanted to excuse himself because he cannot feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or free the captive, he could in no wise say in truth that he cannot forgive his enemies or adversaries. In order that he may say with a clear conscience in the Lord's Prayer those petitions which the wise heavenly Judge dictated to us: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors,' let him listen with fear to that sentence in the Gospel: 'if you forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offenses. But if you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses.'[2] We are treated very kindly, for it is put in our power how we will be judged on the last day. If you forgive, you will be forgiven; if you do not, neither will you be pardoned.

(2) But someone will say: I cannot forgive my enemies. If you have no sin for God to forgive, then perhaps you might say you are unwilling to forgive your neighbor. However, if you have sinned against God incomparably more than any man has sinned against you, why do you not forgive the slight offense when the Lord commands it, in order that God may deign to forgive your many sins? God has not told you: Fast more than you can, abstain from wine or meat, weaken yourselves by more frequent vigils, sail to the east or the west under infinite trials and labors. None of these things is imposed upon us. However, we are commanded to search carefully the confines of our conscience and not have hatred for any man in the world, thus fulfilling what the Lord Himself said: 'All things whatever you would that men

1 Luke 6.38,37.
2 Matt. 6.12,14,15.

should do to you, even so do you also to them.'[3] Now, since there is no one who does not desire forgiveness for the wrongs he has committed against God or man, why do we not treat others as we would be treated, in order that what the Apostle says may come to pass: 'The whole Law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'?[4] Why should we deceive ourselves with a false security, thinking that even if we refuse to forgive our neighbor we can merit to receive pardon for our sins? With great fear we ought to consider that terrible and dreadful sentence of our Lord which the cruel servant deserved to hear:[5] 'Wicked servant! I forgave thee all the debt, because thou didst entreat me. Shouldst not thou also have had pity on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?' What happened then? 'He handed him over,' it says, 'to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.' In order to impress this upon those who came later, He added: 'So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if you do not each forgive your brother from your hearts.' Since by wholeheartedly forgiving our brothers we can without any physical labor merit the pardon of all our sins, what excuse will we have on judgment day if we neglect to perform what we could very easily do with God's help? Doubtless, our Lord will carry out His sentence in our regard, so that with the same judgment whereby we have judged others He will also judge us, and in the measure in which we have forgiven our neighbors He will in turn pardon us. If anyone refuses to do so, he closes the gates of divine mercy upon himself.

(3) All the good works which a man has performed will be in vain if he does not possess a genuine charity which extends to his enemies as well as to his friends. The blessed Apostle Paul, in whose person Christ speaks, does not lie when he says: 'If I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if

3 Matt. 7.12.
4 Gal. 5.14.
5 Matt. 18.32-35.

I deliver my body to be burned, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing.'[6] Now, since 'Covetousness is the root of all evils,'[7] and charity is the root of all good, what does it profit a man if he possesses a thousand branches with flowers or the finest and most delicious fruits, if the root in him is not alive and true? Just as when the root of avarice is torn out all the branches immediately become dry and perish, so, if the root of charity in a man is destroyed by hatred or anger, nothing will remain in him to arrive at eternal life.

(4) If anyone keeps the above-mentioned evils in his heart and thinks he can redeem his sins by abundant almsgiving, he should listen to the Lord saying in the Gospel: 'If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother has anything against thee, go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'[8] This statement shows clearly that the offering of sacrifice or almsgiving is of no avail unless reconciliation with an enemy shall have preceded. God Himself has told us in the Gospel that He will not hear our prayer if wish to keep hatred in our heart. 'He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me,' and 'what does it profit that you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not practise the things that I say?'[9] What are the things that the Lord claims to have mentioned in particular? Surely, those which pertain to peace and harmony. 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'; moreover: 'peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you'; and: 'by this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'[10] Now, if we give alms generously but according to Christ's precepts do not forgive our enemies, we offer our earthly substance to God but subject our soul to the Adversary. Consider whether

6 I Cor. 13.3.
7 I Tim. 6.10.
8 Matt. 5.23,24.
9 John 14.21; Luke 6.46.
10 Matt. 5.44; John 14.27; 13.35.

this division is just and pleasing to God. He does not want our goods so much as our selves, but, because He knows that we love our earthly wealth very much, He desires the offering of what we love. Thus, in accord with His teaching may our heart follow where our treasure has gone ahead. Then, when the priest says: 'Lift up your hearts,' we can with a clear conscience say that we have lifted them up to the Lord.

(5) Who would not tremble at that sentence[11] of the blessed Apostle John which we have frequently mentioned and should constantly repeat? 'Everyone who hates his brother,' he says, 'is a murderer.' 'He who says that he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in the darkness still'; and: 'He who hates his brother is in the darkness, and walks in the darkness, and he does not know whither he goes; because the darkness has blinded his eyes'; and this: 'The paths of those who retain the injury of those who have wronged them are in death.'[12] Since, according to the facts we mentioned above, no shadow of any excuse remains for us, let us with God's help strive with all our might to fulfill His commands, in order to merit His promises. Moreover, that we may not lose the other good works which we perform under God's inspiration, let us faithfully practice charity as the mother of all good works. In order that you might understand more fully and clearly what we suggested above, I thought of adding a little something pertinent to the subject from the works of St. Augustine. Thus, it will be proved very clearly that no one can merit God's mercy if he despises the two precepts of charity, and neglects to forgive his enemies with all his heart.

(6) When the holy Bishop Augustine was discussing the paralytic who had been sick for thirty-eight years, he said: By the number forty, dearly beloved, the course and tenor of our life is mystically designated in sacred Scripture. Before Easter, which signifies the present life, we observe a forty-day

11 I John 3.15; 2.9,11.
12 Prov. 12.28 (Septuagint).

fast so that we may be able to celebrate joyfully the Easter which represents eternal life. Moses fasted thus for forty days and so did Elias, while our Lord and Saviour consecrated a fast of forty days. Moreover, the Jewish people remained in the desert for forty years after they deserved to be freed from Egypt. Therefore, as you see, dearly beloved, that number forty seems to represent a figure of good Christians and of all the saints. That weak man, however, of whom we read in the Gospel that he was lying down, seems to prefigure the human race. Since he lay sick for thirty-eight years, two less than that number forty we mentioned above, let us consider the nature of those two which were lacking to the consecrated number. What are they, brethren, except the two precepts of charity: love of God and of neighbor? They are such that without them everything else is worthless. If a man practices any good works including virginity and even martyrdom, but does not have those two upon which 'depend the whole Law and the Prophets,'[13] he lies weak and paralyzed. Then Christ came and by the grace of the Holy Spirit taught us two things: that we should love God and that we should love a neighbor. Finally, He gave the two denarii for the man who had fallen among robbers, and He spent two days among Samaritans, to strengthen them in love of God and their neighbor. Moreover, as a type of the Church that widow threw two coins into the treasury, and the Lord chose to preach charity to two disciples. As we said, the human race did not deserve to have them before the coming of Christ. Notice, brethren, that the Lord mentioned two things, evidently those which seemed to be lacking. 'Rise, take up thy pallet.'[14] That sick man lacked two things. What does 'rise' mean, except love the Lord? For, if a man loves God, he lifts up his heart. Furthermore, what is it to 'take up thy pallet,' unless to love your neighbor? Thus, love of

13 Matt. 22.40.
14 John 5.8.

neighbor is designated in taking up the pallet. The Apostle says: 'Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.'[15] If, then, your brother has been overtaken in something, let him be carried by you; if you are overcome, let him sustain you. Therefore 'rise' and love God; 'take up thy pallet' and love your neighbor, that is, bear his burden in order that you may find rest. These two elements were necessary for the human race, but men could not possess them alone. Therefore, 'The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts,' not by ourselves, but 'by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us';[16] with the help of Him who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon 40

The Beginning of an Explanation Why Holy and Just Men Have Punished Sinners in This World

(1) The judgments of God are often hidden, dearly beloved, but they are never unjust. Since we read that some sinners were punished in the present life by holy men, we ought to see with simple, pure faith why this was done. Examples show to all the fact that in the Old Testament sin was punished corporally as often as suitable punishments were imposed. However, no one did this because of his own wrath, but leaders or judges punished most justly to inspire fear in the rest of the people. In truth, blessed Moses, of whom we read that 'He was a man meek above all men,'[1] when he came down from the mountain and saw the people sacrificing to idols, ordered 3,000 people to be killed. This was not to

15 Gal. 6.2.
16 Rom. 5.5.

1 Num. 12.3.

satisfy his own wrath, but to avenge the wrong done to God, so that others who saw it might never commit such sins. In order that we may understand in what spirit he issued this command, upon returning home he prayed, saying: 'If thou forgive not thy people their sin, strike me out of the book that thou hast written.'[2] Behold true and perfect charity: he ordered the death of a few people in order to save 600,000, with the women and children excepted. If he had not been aroused with zeal for God to punish a few men, God's justice would have destroyed them all. With a sword in his own hand the blessed priest Phinees also killed one of the chiefs who was lying with a strange woman, and the Lord Himself testifies in what spirit he did this: 'Phinees moved with my zeal turned away my wrath, that I might not destroy all the people.'[3] Truly, his action was not due to carnal hatred, but to zeal and divine love; for his purpose was not revenge, but to free the people from God's wrath.

(2) We know that blessed Elias also did the same thing.[4] When the haughty and wicked king had directed a captain of fifty and his soldiers, ordering him to come to him, blessed Elias grieved over the perversion of the people. Because the impious ruler had persuaded them to worship idols, in the name of the Holy Spirit the Prophet told fire to come down from heaven and consume them, so that the rest of the people might be cured in soul after seeing these struck down bodily. Since no spiritual remedy was effective among them, the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Elias ordered another officer of fifty, who had come haughtily, to be killed together with his soldiers. With what piety the Holy Spirit did this, or with what mind Elias, is shown by the humility of that officer who came thirdly. Here we clearly see that the divine Mercy would have granted forgiveness at once, if human

2 Exod. 32.32.
3 Cf. Num. 25.11.
4 Cf. 4 Kings 1.9-14.

weakness had humbled itself in the first place. Now, we are not to think that they had been sent to Elias to kill him, but, rather, to summon him to the king. Therefore, blessed Elias did not satisfy his own anger, but rather avenged God's injury. He also did this to the idolatrous priests on Mount Carmel when he ordered them all killed so that, when the false religion with its teachers was destroyed, there might be room for the true religion in men's hearts. Blessed Elias is not believed to have done this entirely with his own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, if you would like to know the character of Elias when the grace of the Holy Spirit left him for a little while to try him—he could not endure the threats of a harlot, but fled into the desert for forty days. Thus, one who had closed up the heavens with a word and had caused avenging flames to come from above when God's grace and the Holy Spirit supported him could not stand the word of a harlot. I have mentioned this in order that we might realize that not Elias, but the Holy Spirit operating through him, did all this. Therefore, it is wrong to suppose that Elias wanted to be avenged in those whom he had killed.

(3) We ought to consider this same fact in the case of Eliseus, for, when wicked youths shouted at him: 'Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head,'[5] the Holy Spirit who dwelt in him commanded two bears to go up and tear to pieces forty-two boys. This happened in mystery, signifying the Lord's Passion when the mocking Jews shouted: 'Let him be crucified, let him be crucified,'[6] just as the others had exclaimed: 'Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head,' that is, go up to the cross on Calvary. However, according to the text, only a few were struck, so that the majority might be cured. Now, because the Jews not only despised but even hated the Prophets, they were struck with such a blow in order that they might recognize the power of the Holy Spirit.

5 4 Kings 2.23.
6 Matt. 27.23.

That they were still unwilling to amend their lives the Holy Spirit proclaims elsewhere in prophecy: 'I have struck your children, and you have not received correction.'[7] If, then, the Holy Spirit effected this, it is wrong to attribute it to blessed Eliseus, because, being in truth but a man, he could not possess such great power without the Holy Spirit. Now, if we attribute it to Eliseus, we seem to dare to dispute the just judgment of God.

(4) Lest we think that this happened only in the Old Testament, look at that most blessed and meek Apostle Peter and see what the Holy Spirit did through him in the case of Ananias and Saphira.[8] Again, this was not done to avenge the blessed Apostle, who apparently suffered no personal injury, but through his lips the Holy Spirit cut off at its very roots the worst example of infidelity that sprang up. When we reflect on all these facts spiritually and devoutly, let us suspect nothing wrong in this holy zeal and judgment of the just. Our Lord and Saviour Himself deigns to show them to us, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 41

On Unbecoming Familiarity with Strange Women, and on Martyrdom

(1) Let no one say, dearly beloved, that the contests of the martyrs are impossible in our day, for even times of peace have their martyrs. As we have frequently mentioned, to soften one's anger, to avoid lust, to exercise justice, to despise avarice, to humble pride, are all a large part of martyrdom.

7 Jer. 2.30.
8 Cf. Acts 5.1-11.

Not unfittingly do we include scorn of avarice, the softening of wrath, and the avoidance of lust. Avarice should be despised because it procures unjust gains for us in order to win us, for we would be our own masters if we had no such profits. Like a fire, avarice is to be contemned, for the more it gets the more it wants. Anger, too, should be softened, because it ensnares those who do wrong more than those who suffer it. Moreover, the Apostle Paul clearly proves our advice to avoid lust. In his preaching on resistance to all vices, when he spoke against lust he did not merely tell us to resist it, but he said: 'Flee immorality.'[1] With God's help we should resist the other vices, but overcome lust by flight. Thus, we also read elsewhere in sacred Scripture: 'Gaze not upon the face of a virgin, lest her beauty be a stumbling-block to thee.'[2] In order that blessed Joseph might escape an unchaste mistress, he left the garment with which he had been caught, and fled. Therefore, if you want to be victorious, exercise flight in opposition to the attacks of lust, and do not be ashamed to flee if you desire to obtain the palm of chastity. All Christians, dearly beloved, but especially priests and monks, should fly from unbecoming, shameful intimacy, for, without any doubt, a man who is unwilling to avoid familiarity will quickly fall down into ruin.

(2) Perhaps some careless soul who is not solicitous about the salvation of his soul says in turn: Behold, I indulge in intimacy with strange women, and still I keep the adornments of chastity. Such presumption is unfortunate and exceedingly dangerous, for many have been overcome while they thought themselves to be victorious. But someone else says: I live among strange women, and I exercise self-control; I want to have something to overcome. What does it mean to say that I want to have something to overcome, except that I want to live close to ruin? If you say you continually want to hold

1 1 Cor. 6.18.
2 Eccli. 9.5.

the attacks of lust captive as your adversary, see to it that your captive does not begin to prevail against you, so that you incur eternal shame where you thought you were obtaining triumph! Among all the struggles of Christians, those involving chastity are the most difficult, for the battle is a daily one and victory rare. Chastity has a troublesome enemy which must be overcome and feared daily. Therefore, as we have already said, no one should deceive himself with a false security or dangerously presume upon his own strength, but should, instead, listen to the Apostle when he says: 'Flee immorality.' David, a very holy man under a thousand circumstances, saw a naked woman and immediately committed murder and adultery. Still, some men think they can live in the same house with strange women and yet win the triumph of chastity, not realizing that they are doubly guilty in God's sight by exposing themselves to danger and giving others an example of wicked familiarity. All who have imitated this foolishness and lost the honor of chastity by shameful familiarity will ask their souls on judgment day of those who have given them the pernicious example.

(3) On the other hand, dearly beloved, this fatal allurement of the Devil's helpers, who neither fear nor blush to practice familiarity, should not deceive us by their example. Let us, instead, continually implore God's help that He may deign to free us 'from the snare of the hunters,'[3] for we know that in the midst of these vices which we mentioned above, Christians do not lack the opportunity for daily martyrdom. Now, if Christ is chastity, truth, and justice, just as one who plots against them is His persecutor, so one who wants to defend and observe them both in himself and others will be a martyr. And so a man who loves these virtues with all the strength of his soul, and strives by word and example to make others love them, and whenever truth or justice or chastity are in difficulty he steps in as much as he

3 Ps. 90.3.

can, and endeavors to defend them to the best of his ability—he will receive not one but several crowns as the Lord's recompense. In order that with God's help we, too, may deserve to obtain this, let each one strive to avoid familiarity or secret intercourse, not only with strange women but even with our maid-servants or the daughter or foster child or servant of our neighbors. The lower the status of these women, the easier is their fall. Solomon warns us against familiarity with such people when he says:[4] 'Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn? Or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?' and again: 'the price of a harlot is scarce the half of one loaf: but the woman catcheth the precious soul of a man.' Oh, how great is the wickedness and how deplorable the perversity, when a dissolute man for the sake of momentary lustful pleasure sells to the Devil the soul which Christ redeemed with His Blood! Truly lamentable and miserable is the condition whereby what brings delight passes away at once, while what causes torture endures without end. The assault of passion disappears in a moment, but the shame of the unfortunate soul abides.

(4) Still another says: I am a young man; I will do what I please and do penance afterwards. In other words: I will strike myself with a sharp sword and then go to a doctor. He does not know that a wound is received in a moment, but that the body is scarcely restored to its former health even after a long time. Why does not the adulterer who says he will do penance fear that a sudden attack of fever may come later and carry him off unexpectedly, and then the pleasure will be lost, to be followed by eternal damnation? Concerning miserable lust, of which we spoke before, we must believe the words of the Prophet that: 'As a hammer it has been destroyed throughout the world.'[5] Although after the coming

4 Cf. Prov. 6.27,28,26.
5 Cf. Jer. 50.23.

of our Lord Jesus Christ, in countless monasteries that hammer seemed, as it were, allayed by priests and even laymen who observed chastity, there are many more (all the worse!) who are daily destroyed by that hammer than are freed from its destructive blow. Therefore, I beg you again and again to think it over carefully, and to fear with all your might the words our Lord spoke in the Gospel: 'Anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'[6]

(5) So, as we have said, we must curb secret familiarity and careless guarding of the eyes, not only with strange women but also with our own servants, lest there be fulfilled in us the dreadful words uttered by our Lord through the Prophet: 'Death is come into your souls through your windows.'[7] Now, through what windows does death enter our souls, except the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears? If with your tongue you command a friend or servant to bring you a harlot, through your mouth the sword of eternal death enters your soul. If you willingly listen to evil counsel, if you do not repel a calumniator or one who speaks evil or the man who sings shameful songs, death enters your soul through the windows of your ears. By the Lord's words, 'Anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart,' we understand that full consent to an act will be regarded as the performance of it. Thus, when a man looks at a woman lustfully, the poison of death pours into the depths of his heart through the window of his body. Even though such a thought does not fulfill its intention because some circumstance intervenes, the Lord will nevertheless condemn it as a sin of deed. In this case, the woman with whom he wanted to exercise lust remains chaste, while the man is held as an adulterer at heart. Let us listen to the Prophet when he says: 'With all

6 Matt. 5.28.
7 Cf. Jer. 9.21.

watchfulness keep thy heart,' and: 'turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity.'[8] When a man seizes coals of fire but immediately throws them away they do not hurt him, but if he wants to keep them longer he cannot get rid of them without injury. Similarly, if a man gazes lustfully and by lingering over it allows the evil of lust in his heart to get a hold on his thoughts, he cannot shake them off without injury to his soul. Therefore, let us continually cry with the Prophet: 'My eyes are ever towards the Lord: for he shall pluck my feet out of the snare.'[9] May he deign to grant this, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 42

A Reproof of Married Men Who Do Not Blush or Fear to Commit Adultery. Also, a Rebuke of Men Who Want to Have Miserable Intercourse with Concubines Either Before or After Marriage

(1) I beseech you, brethren, that we more carefully heed the cause of our salvation. In order that we may be able to escape all the evils which we read about the future judgment and may merit happily to reach that bliss which was promised, let us with God's help endeavor to apply the whole attention of our minds, as far as we can, to observe charity, justice, mercy, and chastity. Thus we will be carried to the royal land of paradise as if in a heavenly, spiritual chariot. Meanwhile, let us go there in spirit, so that when the day of judgment comes we may follow bodily. Then the words of the Apostle may be fulfilled in us:[1] 'But our

8 Prov. 4.23; Ps. 118.37.
9 Ps. 24.15.

1 Phil. 3.20; Col. 3.4.

citizenship is in heaven'; and also the following: 'when Christ, your life, shall appear, then you too will appear with him in glory.' Therefore, let us love none of those four virtues less than we should. What profit is there in seeming to possess charity, if you are unwilling to exercise justice? Or how can it help you to say you show mercy, when you hate yourself by not observing chastity, according to what is written: 'He that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul'?[2]

(2) Because we know that very few people are willing to practice chastity, we will now advise your charity more particularly on this subject, for it is written: 'Neither fornicators, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites will possess the kingdom of God'; moreover: 'neither adulterers nor drunkards will possess the kingdom of God.'[3] But, what is worse, there are many who, although they seem to have wives, yet, due to the Devil's persuasion, refuse to preserve their chastity. Neither fearing God nor respecting men, they are inflamed with such lustful passion that they do not fear or blush to commit adultery with their own servants or those of another, or even with strange wives or daughters. It was just, brethren, that our frequent, repeated admonitions should have profited such men, so that they would not injure themselves with the remedy, and might not kill themselves at the very source of true life. The priest's reproof will tend to glory for the obedient, but to punishment for the disobedient. Since those men, as I said, neither regard God nor fear men, do you who devoutly practice faith and chastity under Christ's inspiration rebuke once or twice and even a third time those whom you know commit such wicked sins. If they are unwilling to listen, do not hold conversation with them or invite them to your banquet, or eat with them at the table of another; as the Apostle says: 'With such a one not even

2 Ps. 10.6.
3 1 Cor. 6.9,10.

take food.'[4] Perhaps then they may blush, when they see themselves condemned by good, God-fearing men. If my suggestion is not followed and a man knows that his brother or neighbor is committing adultery but refuses to reprove him, he will be a partner in the sin. According to Scripture: 'If thou didst see a thief thou didst run with him: and with adulterers thou hast been a partaker';[5] as the Apostle says: 'and not only they that do them, but they also that consent to them that do them.'[6] Men who do not rebuke adulterers themselves or secretly bring them to the priest's attention make us suspect that the reason for the lack of reproof is that they commit similar sins. For my part, it is sufficient if I cry out with great grief of soul and endless groaning; but if you want to be free from your own sins and those of another, do not spare such people. If they refuse to listen when you admonish them frequently in secret, bring it to the knowledge of our humble person. In the Gospel our Lord said the same thing about sinners:[7] 'Show him his fault between thee and him alone. If he listen to thee, thou hast won thy brother. But if he do not listen to thee, appeal to the Church,' that is, inform the priest. 'If he refuse to hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican.' What is worse, sometimes those who commit such sins not only are not corrected, but are even flattered and amiably received by some. Thus, their wicked vices are fostered and committed without any fear or shame. However, we ought to fear what is written concerning Achan, who had stolen the golden rule from Jericho. Because of one man's sin God's anger was vented upon all the people, nor did it leave them until the one who had committed the evil was stoned at the Lord's command.

(3) Since those we are speaking about want their wives

4 Cf. 1 Cor. 5.11.
5 Ps. 49.18.
6 Rom. 1.32 (Douay).
7 Matt. 18.15-17.

to be chaste, with what kind of a conscience do they commit wicked adultery, thereby asserting that what is not lawful for their wives is perfectly licit for themselves? As though God gave two commandments, one for men and another for women! If anyone does this, let him tell us with what sanction he acts, for all adultery is punished by both divine and human law. This vice is not forbidden because many people commit it. In fact, the less it is restricted by men, the more severely it is punished by the divine Judge. How is it that some men are so insolent that they say cruel vice is lawful for men but not for women? They do not reflect that men and women have been redeemed equally by Christ's Blood, have been cleansed by the very same baptism, approach the Lord's altar to receive His Body and Blood together, and that with God there is no distinction of male or female. 'God is not a respecter of persons.'[8] Therefore, what is unlawful for women similarly never was and never can be lawful for men. However, the unfortunate practice has been introduced whereby a wife who is found with her man-servant is punished, but if a man wallows in the sewer of lust with many maids, not only is he not punished, but he is even praised by his associates. Moreover, telling each other who has done most of this sort of thing, they admit it with laughter and most foolish jeering. On judgment day their laughter will be turned into wailing, and their jests will be changed into wounds. But men who do this do not fear or believe at all in the future judgment.

(4) With a clear conscience I proclaim and testify that if a married man commits adultery and is not saved by long penance together with abundant almsgiving, nor desists from the very sin, if he suddenly dies as usually happens, he will perish for ever. The name of Christian will not benefit him, for he has committed what Christ forbade as well as failing to carry out the Lord's commands. If it is a sin for a man to

8 Acts 10.34.

be intimate with his wife except through a desire for children, what can men think or what hope can they promise themselves, if, being married, they commit adultery? By this means they descend to the depths of hell, refusing to hear the Apostle when he says: 'The time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none';[9] and: 'every one of you learn how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who have no hope.'[10] Consider that men who use their wives except with the desire for children cannot be without sin unless they continually give alms. Now, if this is said concerning legitimate marriage, what do you think will be the fate on judgment day of those who dare to commit open or secret adultery without a thought of fear of God? Of these it is written: 'God will judge sinners and adulterers,'[11] while the Apostle says in the words quoted above: 'nor will adulterers possess the kingdom of God.'[12] What benefit do you derive, unhappy soul, from the fact that you are called a Christian, if by your sin of adultery you shall merit to be excluded from the kingdom of God?

(5) Thus I beg and exhort your charity, dearly beloved, that those who intend to marry observe virginity until their wedding. Just as no one wants to marry a wife who has been violated, so no one should defile himself by adulterous associations before marriage. What is worse, a great many have concubines before their marriage. Since their number is large, a bishop cannot excommunicate them all, but he tolerates them with groans and many sighs, hoping the good and merciful Lord will grant them fruitful repentance, in order that they may be able to obtain forgiveness. Now because this evil has become so habitual that it is not even con-

9 1 Cor. 7.29.
10 Cf. 1 Thess. 4.4,5,12.
11 Heb. 13.4.
12 1 Cor. 6.9,10.

sidered a sin, behold I proclaim before God and His angels that any one who keeps a concubine either before or after his marriage commits adultery. Still worse is the adultery of a man who publicly does it without any shame, as if with sanction, although no reason permits it. Finally, we realize that considerable sin arises from the fact that children conceived by concubines are born as slaves, not free men. Therefore, even if they obtain their liberty, no law or order allows them to receive inheritance from their father. Consider whether there can be an absence of sin, when the honor of noble birth is humbled to such an extent that slaves are born of noble parents. So grave a sin is it that in Rome, if a man wants to marry, but realizes he is not a virgin, he may not dare to go within to receive the nuptial blessing. See how serious it is, if he does not merit to receive a blessing with the one he desires to marry.

(6) I fear that when we mention these facts, some of you may become angry at us instead of at yourselves. Our sermon is proposed to your charity as a mirror. Just as when a lady looks in a mirror she corrects whatever she sees crooked but does not break the mirror, so as each one of you recognizes his own hideousness in the sermon, it is more proper for him to amend his life than to become angry at the preaching which is like a mirror. Similarly, if men receive any blows, they are more anxious to care for their wounds than to despise the remedy. Therefore, let no one sin doubly by wilful anger against these spiritual remedies, but, instead, patiently and even willingly hear our words. If a man is willing to accept salutary reproof, he already shows that he is willing to turn away from sin at least in part. Moreover, if a man is displeased with his vices, surely that which is good will please him, for the farther he is removed from vices the closer he approaches virtue. May He deign to grant this, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 43

An Admonition to Observe Conjugal Chastity and Not to Keep Concubines

(1) When we commend the good of chastity as something fitting and proper, dearly beloved, perhaps some young men who are still of vigorous age are saying: We are young, we cannot restrain ourselves. We can and should reply to these people that perhaps they are unable to observe chastity because they eat more than is proper and take more wine than they should, are unwilling to avoid familiarity with women, and neither fear nor blush to keep suspicious company. Men of this kind should listen to the Apostle when he says: 'Flee immorality,'[1] and: 'do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery';[2] while Solomon asserts: 'Wine and women make even wise men fall off, and rebuke the prudent.'[3] Those who say they are unable to observe chastity should tell us whether they are married, or not. If they are, why do they not heed what the Lord says in the Gospel: 'All things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them.'[4] Why do they not observe toward their wives the fidelity they desire to receive from them? Since a man receives his name from manliness, and a woman hers from weakness, that is, from frailty, why does anyone want his wife to be victorious against cruel, bestial lust, when he himself is overcome and falls at the first assault of it?

(2) At this point, perhaps, those who are not married say they can excuse themselves because they have no wives to whom they owe fidelity; for this reason, they are unable to control themselves. To those who attempt to allege this

1 1 Cor. 6.18.
2 Eph. 5.18.
3 Eccli. 19.2.
4 Matt. 7.12.

false and miserable excuse it can and should be replied most justly that no one should avoid what is unlawful more than the man who has rejected what was permitted. Although you might marry and in the face of the authority of all the Scriptures never commit adultery, why do you not with God's grace accept what is lawful, but dare to offend God and commit what is unlawful? I would like to know whether those who have no wives, and neither fear nor blush to commit adultery before they are joined in wedlock, would want their spouses to be violated by adulterers before they come to marriage. Since there is no one who would patiently accept this, why does not each one observe toward his spouse the fidelity he wants observed by her? Why does he desire to take a virgin as his wife, when he is corrupted? Why does he wish to be united to a wife who is alive, when he is dead in soul because of adultery, according to what is written: 'The soul that sinneth, the same shall die'?[5] Moreover, the Apostle exclaims in terrible words: 'God will judge the immoral and adulterers,'[6] and: 'adulterers will not possess the kingdom of God.'[7] Furthermore: 'They are all adulterers, their hearts like an oven.'[8]

(3) Perhaps some think that it is unlawful for women to commit fornication before marriage, but lawful for men. What is worse, these exceedingly grave evils that are worthy of punishment are committed by many men without any fear of the Lord, and in fact they have become so habitual on the part of many that they are considered common and slight, no longer regarded as serious sins. Now, in the Catholic faith, whatever is not lawful for women is equally unlawful for men. Man and woman were redeemed together for one price, the precious blood of Christ; they are called to one faith, and are assembled in one body of the Church.

5 Ezech. 18.20.
6 Heb. 13.4.
7 1 Cor. 6.9.
8 Osee 7.4.

They receive the sacrament of baptism together, approach the altar to receive the Body and Blood of Christ at the same time, and the same precepts are given to both sexes. Since this is true, with what boldness, or with what kind of a conscience, do men think that they may do alone with impunity what is unlawful for both men and women? Those who dare to do this should know for certain that if they do not quickly amend their lives and perform fruitful penance, if they are suddenly snatched from this life an eternal fire will torture them without any remedy.

(4) How is it that many men do not blush to take concubines before marriage, and then afterwards dismiss them to claim lawful wives? They argue with themselves that first they seek unjust riches and unfair gains as the result of many calumnies and robbery, but afterwards, contrary to reason, they marry wives who are more noble and richer than themselves. Behold with what evils they bind themselves, since they unhappily desire to serve avarice and passion as well as dissipation. Therefore, before God and His angels I attest and declare that God has always forbidden these vices and they have never been pleasing to Him; above all, it never has been and never will be lawful in Christian times to keep concubines. What is worse, many men do this with the authority of the forum, but not of heaven; not at the bidding of justice, but under the control of lust. The Apostle says even to those who have wives:[9] 'The time is short; it remains that those who have wives be as if they had none'; and: 'abstain for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer.' How, then, is it permissible to have adulterous concubines, when even those who are married are commanded to observe chastity? For this reason I freely proclaim again and again that one who dares to keep a concubine before his legitimate marriage commits a worse sin than the man who commits adultery. One who commits adultery still wants to

9 1 Cor. 7.29,5.

do this serious wrong secretly, for he either fears or blushes to do it in public; but one who publicly has a concubine with insolent boldness believes he can freely do this damnable thing in the sight of all the people.

(5) Now, perhaps those who are not stained with this sin will say: Why are not those who commit it suspended from communion with the Church? This great crime is not so punished by priests because it is committed by so many. If only one or two or four or five presumed to do this evil, they could and should not only be suspended from communion, but even separated from the conversation and banquets of Christian people, as the Apostle says: 'With such a one do not even take food.'[10] However, as was already said, the number of those who commit the sin prevents the priests of the Lord from segregating them. Still, good priests do what they can, striving with perfect charity to pray and sigh continually, together with uttering moans and groans. Thus, by advice and prayer in their behalf they may sometime be able to recall to repentance those against whom they cannot exercise severity or ecclesiastical discipline because of their large number. Therefore, I beg and exhort you again and again in like manner that anyone who desires to marry should observe virginity up to the time of marriage, just as he wants to find his wife a virgin. So grave an evil is it to be violated before marriage that when the wedding has come a man does not deserve to receive the blessing with his spouse, and there is fulfilled in him what we read: 'He would not have blessing and it shall be far from him.'[11] If the remedy of repentance does not save him, consider what will become of him or to what kind of a sentence a man will have to be subject at the future judgment, if in this life he has been unworthy to receive a blessing with his wife.

(6) Now listen, brethren—if unmarried men who keep

10 1 Cor. 5.11.
11 Ps. 108.18.

concubines or commit adultery are in such grave danger, what do those unhappy men think who have wives and commit adultery, in insane fury or cruel misery despairing of God's judgment? Surely, they neither fear the punishments of hell nor wish for eternal rewards. If they had faith and believed in God they would dread the coming judgment with fear and trembling. It is evident that they trust men but not God, for publicly where men see them they shun adultery, but in secret where God sees they are entirely without fear. If they had just a spark of faith they would not dare to commit adultery in the sight of their Lord, just as they do not allow their servants to offend in their presence. Of such men the Holy Spirit exclaims through the Prophet: 'The fool hath said in his heart: There is no God.'[12] It is certain that a man does not believe in God if he fears to do publicly in the presence of men what he does secretly in darkness before the face of God. Does not the unhappy man know that 'The countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things: to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth'?[13]

(7) But perhaps someone says: How can I observe chastity when I am separated from my wife for so many years under the compulsion of business or at the bidding of the king? To him it can be replied most justly that he should return to his wife. When I give this answer to a merchant, he may tell me that if he loses his business he will not have a means of livelihood. A soldier says: If I desert the army, I will incur the king's wrath. To such men it can truly be said that, if he fears the king and for this reason does not return to his own wife, he should also fear God and not touch another woman. Just as a king can kill a man if he deserts the army and returns to his wife unbidden, so God can condemn with eternal punishment the man who commits adultery when far from his wife. I ask you, brethren, if on

12 Ps. 13.1.
13 Ps. 33.17.

account of business needs or the king's command a man is separated from his wife for a month or even a long time, why is not chastity observed during that length of time for the sake of God and his soul? Business or the orders of a king require a man not to know his wife for so many days; do not love of God and His command require that another woman be not touched? If men observe this because of business profits or a king's command but neglect it for God's sake, they should know that all who do so will not be spared the evil hearing when they stand before the tribunal of Christ. Unless repentance shall have saved them, it will be said to them: 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire.'[14]

(8) How is it that sometimes a very brave man goes forth to battle and perhaps kills at least ten of the enemy; then as a result of his victory he takes a young girl as booty and by being united to her in adultery kills his own soul with the sword of sin? Consider how great an evil it is that a man appears more cruel in himself by killing his own soul through dissipation than by killing the bodies of his adversaries in a carnal victory. Truly sad and pitiful it is, as I already said, for a man who has overcome ten adversaries to be conquered by a single woman if he kills that many enemies bodily but is strangled in heart by one girl. An exceedingly grave evil it is if a strong man who is not conquered by the sword is overpowered by lust; if soft, alluring things ruin a man whom hard things could not overcome. Thus, one who disdains to be a captive or slave of men may merit to be the slave of sin. Moreover, it is more disgraceful to be a slave mentally than physically, according to what is written: 'For by whatever a man is overcome, of this also he is the slave.'[15]

(9) If I would not say this to you, dearly beloved, I would have to render an account of your souls on the day

14 Matt. 25.41.
15 2 Peter 2.19.

of judgment. If a man wants to become angry at me rather than amend his life, he will not have the means of excusing himself through ignorance before the tribunal of the eternal Judge. He cannot say he was not admonished or prohibited from those evils or summoned to what is pleasing to God by frequent reproaches and admonitions. However, we trust in the Lord's mercy that He will deign to inspire the negligent to become angry at themselves or their sins rather than at the remedies of the priest. Then, like sick people who seek bodily health from physical doctors, they may desire remedies for their souls from spiritual ones. We are confident that the divine mercy will grant that they will strive to make us rejoice over their amendment and with the help of our Lord will merit happily to obtain an eternal reward.

Sermon 44

That Chastity Is to Be Observed, Even with One's Own Wife. On Abortions. How Purity and Chastity Should Be Observed at the Approach of Sunday or Other Feasts

(1) You give me great joy, dearly beloved, when you come to church with such devout faith on the feasts of the martyrs. However, if with God's help you want to perfect spiritually your progress and our joy, under God's inspiration observe such peace and charity among yourselves that you harbor hatred for no one in your hearts. Pray for the good, that they may always become better; continually plead for the wicked, that they may be quickly corrected. Moreover, in accord with the Lord's teaching: 'All things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to

them.'[1] Then peace, justice, and mercy are observed in truth, when we not only do evil to no man, but also strive to help wherever we can. Therefore, if with Christ's help we faithfully do this, imitating the blessed martyrs in these noble, excellent works which we mentioned above, we will also be able to have a share with them in eternal bliss. Without any doubt the holy martyrs will surely intercede for us, when they recognize something of their virtues in us. Above all, with God's help observe chastity, according to what is written: 'Nor will adulterers possess the kingdom of God',[2] and: 'God will judge the immoral and adulterers.'[3] Young men and women who are going to be joined in marriage should observe virginity until their marriage. If they are corrupted by adultery before their lawful union, they come to their wedding alive physically but evidently dead in soul, for it is written: 'The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.'[4]

(2) No woman should take drugs for purposes of abortion, nor should she kill her children that have been conceived or are already born. If anyone does this, she should know that before Christ's tribunal she will have to plead her case in the presence of those she has killed. Moreover, women should not take diabolical draughts with the purpose of not being able to conceive children. A woman who does this ought to realize that she will be guilty of as many murders as the number of children she might have borne. I would like to know whether a woman of nobility who takes deadly drugs to prevent conception wants her maids or tenants to do so. Just as every woman wants slaves born for her so that they may serve her, so she herself should nurse all the children she conceives, or entrust them to others for rearing. Otherwise, she may refuse to conceive children or, what is more serious, be willing to kill souls which might have been good

1 Matt. 7.12.
2 1 Cor. 6.9.
3 Heb. 13.4.
4 Ezech. 18.20.

Christians. Now, with what kind of a conscience does she desire slaves to be born of her servants, when she herself refuses to bear children who might become Christians?

(3) As often as you come to church and wish to receive the sacraments of Christ on a feast, observe chastity several days before it, so that you may be able to approach the Lord's altar with a peaceful conscience. Devoutly practice this also throughout Lent, even to the end of the Pasch, so that the Easter solemnity may find you pure and chaste. In fact, a good Christian should not only observe chastity for a few days before he communicates, but he should never know his wife except from the desire for children. A man takes a wife for the procreation of children, not for the sake of lust. Even the marriage rite mentions this: 'For the procreation of children,'[5] it says. Notice that it does not say for the sake of lust, but 'for the procreation of children.' I would like to know, dearly beloved, what kind of a harvest a man could gather if he sowed his field in one year as often as he is overcome by dissipation and abuses his wife without any desire for children. If those who are unwilling to control themselves plowed and sowed repeatedly their land which was already sown, let us see in what kind of fruit they would rejoice. As you well know, no land can produce proper fruit if it is sown frequently in one year. Why, then, does a man do with his body what he does not want done with his field?

(4) Now, someone says: I am young; I can in no way control myself. Perhaps you do not control yourself because you eat more than is necessary, and drink more wine than you should. Perhaps you even occupy your mind with shameful thoughts, neither fearing nor blushing to willingly and frequently utter dissolute words or to hear them from others. With God's help begin to restrain your gluttonous desires, and to occupy your mind and your tongue with

5 These are words from one of the Orations in the marriage ceremony.

chaste thoughts and upright words. You will see that, if God assists you, you will be able to observe chastity. If no bodily infirmity hinders you, do not mind fasting rather often or rising a little earlier for church, so that you may guard your soul against the stains of lust. If in spite of your faithful obedience you see yourself exhausted by assaults of the flesh, and if several times you are persuaded to know your wife without any desire for children, give alms every day according to your means, for we read: 'As water quencheth a fire, so alms destroyeth sins.'[6] Moreover, grant full pardon to all who may have offended you, for this is a great and salutary remedy against all sins. Thus, what was defiled by incontinence may be cleansed by fasting and almsgiving, but most of all by the forgiveness of enemies.

(5) However, you say: It is no sin to know one's wife except with the desire for children. So great a sin is it, that the repentant Prophet exclaims: 'I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me.'[7] So, too, we read in the Old Testament that, when the Jewish people were about to approach Mount Sinai, it was said to them in the Lord's teaching: 'Be sanctified, and be ready against the third day, and come not near your wives,'[8] and: 'if any man be defiled in a dream by night, let him not eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of salvation, lest his soul be cut off from his people.'[9] If after defilement which happens to us even unwillingly we may not communicate unless compunction and almsgiving come first, and fasting, too, if infirmity does not prevent it, who can say that there is no sin if we do such things intentionally when we are wide awake? Finally, when women marry, they do not dare to enter church for thirty days; men should do the same in like manner.

6 Eccli. 3.33.
7 Ps. 50.7.
8 Exod. 19.15.
9 Deut. 23.10; Lev. 7.20.

(6) But, you say: Of course it is a sin, but only a small one. Indeed, we do not say that it is a capital offense. However, if it is practiced too frequently and not redeemed by fasting or alms, it makes the soul very unclean. Do not despise your sins because they are small; be afraid because they are so numerous. Truly, drops of rain are small, but they fill rivers, drag along heavy weights, and lift up trees along with their roots. I would like to know whether you who say that it is a small sin, as often as you commit such sins would want to suffer slight blows on your body, spots or rents in your clothes? If you do not agree to the blows on your body and the rents or spots on your clothes, with what kind of a conscience do you not fear to do the same thing to your soul? Therefore, one who does this loves his clothing and body more than his soul. Now, since we have all been created interiorly in our soul according to God's image, as often as we say or do something shameful we defile God's image. Consider, then, whether this is becoming or proper for you. I say truly, brethren, that God does not deserve this of us, that His image in us should suffer insult through evil concupiscence. Since no man wants to come to church with his tunic covered with dirt, I do not know with what kind of a conscience he dares to approach the altar with his soul defiled by dissipation. Evidently, he does not fear what the Apostle said: 'Whoever partakes of the body and blood of the Lord unworthily will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.'[10] If we blush and fear to touch the Eucharist with dirty hands, we should fear much more to receive the same Eucharist within a polluted soul. As I mentioned, we have been created in our soul according to God's image. Now, if you put your image on a tablet of wood or stone, and someone impudently wanted to shatter that image with stones or to stain it with dirt, I wonder whether you would not take up arms against him. I ask you, if you are so jealous

10 Cf. 1 Cor. 11.27.

of your image that was painted on a lifeless tablet, what kind of an injury do you suppose God suffers when His living image in us is defiled by dissipation? Therefore, if we do not restrain ourselves for our own sake, let us do so for the sake of God's image according to which we have been made.

(7) Above all, no one should know his wife when Sunday or other feasts come around. Similar precautions should be taken as often as women menstruate, for the Prophet says: 'Do not come near to a menstruous woman.'[11] If a man is aware that his wife is in this condition but refuses to control himself on a Sunday or feast, the children who are then conceived will be born as lepers, or epileptics, or perhaps even demoniacs. Lepers are commonly born, not of wise men who observe chastity on feasts and other days, but especially of farmers who do not know how to control themselves. Truly, brethren, if animals without intellect do not touch each other except at a fixed and proper time, how much more should men who have been created according to God's image observe this? What is worse, there are some dissolute or drunken men who sometimes do not even spare their wives when they are pregnant. Therefore, if they do not amend their lives, we are to consider them worse than animals. Such men the Apostle addresses when he says: 'Every one of you learn how to possess his vessel in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who have no hope.'[12] Because what is worse, many do not observe proper chastity with their own wives, they should give abundant alms, as I said above, and forgive all their enemies. Thus, as we mentioned, what has become defiled by dissipation may be cleansed by constant almsgiving.

(8) I beseech you to be indulgent with me, brethren, since it is for the salvation of your souls that I appear to

11 Ezech. 18.6.
12 1 Thess. 4.4,5.

advise you on these matters with great fear and trembling and even with shame. It is right for me to say them, moreover, and necessary for you to hear them. So, wherever you are, tell each other everything you have heard from us, and admonish each other with charity. Just as I will be guilty before the tribunal of Christ if I do not warn you, so if through negligence you do not admonish men in my stead you ought to fear that you will also have to render an account of them. However, we trust in God's mercy that He will inspire you so to live that the Lord may repay you with a double reward in this world and in the next, because of your life pleasing to God and your efforts for the salvation of others. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 45

An Admonition Teaching Us to Avoid Shameful Thoughts and with God's Help Always to Keep in Our Hearts Those Which Are Holy

(1) We read in sacred Scripture, dearly beloved, that holy counsel should keep those who are solicitous for their soul's salvation, as the divine Word puts it: 'Holy counsel shall keep thee.'[1] If holy counsel keeps a soul, that which is unholy not only fails to keep it but even kills it. Perhaps someone says: Who can always be thinking of God and eternal bliss, since all men must be solicitous for food, clothing, and the management of their household? God does not bid us be free from all anxiety over the present life, for he instructs us through His Apostle: 'If any man will not work,

1 Prov. 2.11.

neither let him eat.'[2] The same Apostle repeats the idea with reference to himself when he says: 'We worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you.'[3] Since God especially advises reasonable thought of food and clothing, so long as avarice and ambition which usually serve dissipation are not linked with it, any action or thought is most rightly considered holy. The only provision is that those preoccupations should not be so excessive that they do not allow us to have time for God, according to the words: 'The burdens of the world have made them miserable.'[4] Since bodily necessities are satisfied with little, while ambition is never appeased even if it obtains the whole world, let us reject wicked thoughts which spring from the poisonous root of passion. Let us, on the other hand, love only those which will help us obtain an eternal reward, so that what was said before may be fulfilled in us: 'Holy counsel shall keep thee.'[5] Now, since two kinds of thoughts, good and bad, continually try to insinuate themselves into our hearts, with God's help let us strive with our whole heart and soul to admit those which are holy, so that we may exclude lustful, disgraceful ones. Perhaps someone says: 'Bad, shameful thoughts have become so habitual in my heart that I cannot dispel them in any way. Now, it is a known fact that love is overcome by love. Let us begin to love good thoughts, and God will immediately deign to free us from those which are evil. Let purity take possession of the place which a lustful, mean thought held in our heart; let mercy restore what avarice ravaged; let humility rebuild what pride destroyed. Let the sweetness of charity and goodness compose the soul which malice and envy had struck with snake-like poison.

(2) The fact that we should not admit wicked thoughts into our hearts can be proved by clear examples. Notice, I

2 2 Thess. 3.10.
3 1 Thess. 2.9.
4 The source of this quotation is not known.
5 Prov. 2.11.

beg you, that if someone spits or coughs on our clothing they fill us with such horror that we are unwilling to look at it or even to touch it with our fingertips. Now if spittle on our garments, which is directed there without any sin, causes us horror, what kind of horror do you think lustful thoughts which the Devil instils into our souls inspire in God? Moreover, if we shudder at spittle or phlegm which we accept unwillingly, how much more should we with God's help more swiftly reject the evil thoughts which we willingly allow to remain in our hearts? Consider further that if into God's temple, which is made of wood and stone, anyone brings pigs or dogs, or throws mud, or spreads dung, we are so offended that we want the person who was guilty of such negligence scourged. Since this is true, what do we think of ourselves if into our souls which are living temples of God we admit wicked or malicious thoughts which are much worse than dung, and thus inflict insults upon God who deigns to dwell in us? Therefore, although it is much more necessary for us to endeavor to preserve our souls from the uncleanness of sins, we want to keep both God's temple and our garments free from any defilement. Tell me this, I beseech you. If at any gathering of people a notorious harlot should seek with outstretched arms to be embraced or kissed, would you patiently and willingly allow it, or would you not repel her with your arms and spit in her face, fearing that perhaps those who see it may think she did it from force of habit? It is certain that not only good, honorable men do not allow this to happen, but even those who are slaves to dissipation in secret shrink from a harlot's embraces in the sight of men, for they fear men's reproaches in public more than God's presence in secret. If, then, because of the judgment of men no one is willing to be kissed publicly by harlots, why do we not only frequently admit the vilest harlots, that is, wicked, shameful thoughts, into the secrets of our conscience, but even allow them to stay for a considerable time?

(3) There is another comparison which we ought to consider prudently. Notice this, brethren, that if anyone picks up a live coal in his hand, even a large one, but throws it away at once, he will not feel the burn or even pain; but if he keeps it even for a moment, he cannot throw it away without injury. Why do we not fear concerning evil thoughts in our hearts what we observe with regard to living coals on our body? Here is still another fact in proof of what we have said. Tell me, I beg you, whether there is any man willing to stand over a recess or sewer full of worms and stir up their rottenness? Now, compare the odor of a sewer and bad thoughts, and see which one can exhale the greater stench. If you judge correctly and well, the bad thoughts return an incomparably more offensive odor than does a sewer, because it is a stench of the soul while the other is a physical one. Doubtless, as much better as the soul is than the body, so much the greater stench results from filthy thoughts in the soul than from material recesses or sewers. Therefore, just as we do not want our bodies to remain a long time in a place full of stench, so let us not allow wicked, filthy thoughts to remain even a moment in our souls or our senses.

(4) Because among other thoughts anger, ambition and dissipation especially try continually to steal into our hearts, if with Christ's help we want to repel them let us strive to fill our minds with holy thoughts. We have many examples in Scripture in which our Lord promises us the rewards of the saints and threatens us with the punishments of sinners. His purpose is that the just may persevere in goodness and the wicked be recalled from their vices. If we ourselves are willing to read them frequently or gladly listen to others read them, bad thoughts will never be able to overtake us. Since this is true, dearly beloved, we can and should consider with great shame that, although we are unwilling to allow a spark of fire to enter the chest where our clothes are, we not only allow the flames of anger interiorly to enter the chest of

our conscience by bad thoughts, but by false admiration even provoke and stir them up to a greater blaze. What excuse will we have before God if we love our clothes more than our soul? What is asked of us, beloved brethren, is neither burdensome, nor hard, nor impossible. Although we ought to preserve our souls incomparably more than our garments, a man shows considerable progress if he guards his soul in such a way that it will not be defiled by wicked, shameful thoughts, just as he protects his clothing from destruction by moths or mice. I beseech you, brethren, what evil has been merited by our soul which is made to God's image, that we are unwilling to apply care to it in proportion to the thought we seem to give to our clothes? Moreover, since human eyes see our bodies, but the eyes of the angels behold our souls, I do not know with what kind of conscience we adorn and arrange with precious gifts our body which in a few days or years worms will devour in the sepulchre, while we fail to adorn with good works our soul which must appear before God and the angels in heaven.

(5) Therefore, let us change for the better and provide for our bodies moderate, sufficient food and clothing. Then by alms for the poor let us store up for our soul in eternal bliss all that we can of better things. Indeed, if we think more of our body than of our soul, when we come to the nuptial banquet unadorned with good works but, rather, wrapped in the dirty rags of vice, it may be said to us: 'Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment?'[6] May the Lord avert from us what follows: 'Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.' Behold the sentence a man will deserve to hear if he adorns his body through vanity and dissipation but refuses to adorn his soul with good works for the sake of eternal life. However, we believe that in His mercy God will deign to inspire us with His help to keep our hearts unharmed

6 Matt. 22.12,13.

by bad thoughts and to preserve our body shining with purity and moderation. Then, when we merit to appear before the tribunal of the eternal Judge, we will not deserve to receive punishment for our evil actions, but eternal rewards for our good deeds: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 46

An Admonition to Use All One's Strength in Avoiding the Vice of Drunkenness

(1) Through the goodness of Christ, dearly beloved, I believe that you dread the vice of drunkenness as a pit of hell, and are unwilling not only to drink to excess yourselves, but also to encourage or compel others to do so. Nevertheless, it can happen that some careless souls may be unwilling to remain sober. You, then, who always give temperate banquets, do not recall to your injury the fact that we must also reprove those other men who are drunkards. Indeed, dearly beloved, although the vice of drunkenness is serious and exceedingly hateful to God, it has spread into the daily life of men throughout the world because of the example of many, with the result that men who refuse to acknowledge God's precepts no longer think or believe that it is a sin. The matter has reached a point where they ridicule at their banquets men who can drink less, and in their harmful friendship do not blush to encourage men to take more drink than they should. A person who forces another to saturate himself with excessive drink would cause less harm by wounding his body with a sword than if he kills his soul with drunkenness.

(2) Our bodies, indeed, are earthly. Now, just as when rain is too heavy and lasts too long the earth is flooded and resolves itself into mud, with the result that no cultivation is possible, so also our body, when it is saturated with too much drink, cannot receive spiritual cultivation or produce the necessary fruits of the soul. Therefore, just as everyone wants enough rain in the fields to be able to cultivate them and rejoice in an abundance of fruits, so also in the soil of the body they should drink only what is proper. Otherwise, through excessive drinking the soil of the body will be turned into a marsh, and be more capable of producing the worms and serpents of vices than the fruits of good works. Truly, all drunkards are what the marshes seem to be. Your charity knows well what springs up in swamps. Everything that grows there is known to bear no fruit. Snakes and leeches are produced there, frogs, and different kinds of worms which might cause horror rather than offer something to serve as food. The very grasses and trees which usually spring up in swamps or along the banks seem to have no use except to be burned up each year. Notice that whatever arises from drunkenness is also ready for the fire.

(3) Such is the nature of all drunkards, as I said before. Their lunches are prolonged until night, their dinners the morning star beholds. Even when they seem to be thirsty they cannot stand up, and their senses are dull, heavy, and blunt as of men already buried. Lastly, in their drunkenness they often do not know themselves or others. They cannot walk or stand, and are able to say or hear nothing at all that is sensible. Frequently, they are not ashamed to gorge themselves to the extent of vomiting, and to drink in measure without measure. Indeed, larger cups are provided, and there is a contest according to a fixed rule for drinking; then whoever wins merits praise for his crime. Thence arise quarrels and disputes, after that they twist their limbs in horrible dances, and because of it adultery and sometimes murders are com-

mitted. Whenever men drink too much they are as if relaxed in paralysis, so that they cannot walk on their feet and are carried to bed by others in a most disgraceful fashion. There is a mist before their eyes, dizziness, headache, a ruddy complexion, trembling of the limbs, an insensibility of soul and mind. In such men are fulfilled the words: 'Who hath woe? Who hath tumults? Who hath wrath? Who hath contentions? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? Surely they that pass their time in wine, investigate where there is drink, and study to drink off their cups?'[1]

(4) However, men who want to be like this try miserably to excuse themselves. They say: My friend will be unpleasant if I do not give him as much as he wants to drink when I invite him to a banquet. Do not have a friend who is willing to make you displeasing to God, for he is both his own enemy and yours. If you make yourself and someone else intoxicated, you will have a man as your friend, but God as an enemy. Now, consider well whether it is right to separate yourself from God by uniting yourself to a drunkard. Finally, do not compel or force him, but leave it in his power to drink as much as he pleases. Then if he wants to get drunk, he will perish alone and not both of you will sin. Oh, the misery of the human race! How many are found compelling drunkards and the intemperate to drink to excess, while they neglect to give even one cup to the poor who ask for it at the door. They do not realize that what they evidently force upon the intemperate, Christ should be receiving in the person of the poor, for He has said: 'As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me.'[2] When men of this kind bury others in excessive drink, they say to the poor who beg an alms: Go, go on, God will give to you. To be sure, when the man walks on, another man does give him an alms. Why, then, does he say: Go, go on, and God

1 Prov. 23.29,30.
2 Matt. 25.40.

will give to you, unless he means: Go to a man who has a God and he will give to you? Thus, he admits in his own words that God is not in him to inspire him to offer something to the poor. I beseech you, dearly beloved, to listen carefully. Notice that when horses or other animals are brought to water, even if they are kept there for a long time they refuse to drink any more after their thirst has been satisfied; in fact, they cannot do so. Now, the drunkards should stop to think whether they are to be considered worse than animals. Although animals refuse to drink any more than is necessary, men take three or four times as much as they should. The refreshment they might have enjoyed reasonably on three or four days men hasten to ruin, or rather to waste, in one day by their big sin. If only they wasted the drink but did not perish themselves!

(5) The extent of the evil of drunkenness is clearly shown in the case of Lot and his daughters. When he was drunk with wine, he lay with his daughters and was not aware of it. Pharao, too, in a state of intoxication had the master-baker hung on a cross. Moreover, the Jewish people of whom we read: 'The people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play,'[3] drank too much wine and afterwards demanded the building of idols. In honor of these images they began to dance and to twist their limbs frantically in all kinds of gestures. Herod, also, as soon as he became heated from too much wine, ordered St. John the Baptist to be killed as the reward of a single girl's dancing. What might still arise from the vice of drunkenness the Holy Spirit affirms in the words of Solomon: 'Wine and women make wise men fall off, and shall rebuke the prudent';[4] and again: 'Look not upon the wine when it is yellow, when the color thereof shineth in the glass. It goeth in pleasantly: but in the end, it will bite like a snake, and will spread abroad poison like a basilisk. Thy

3 Exod. 32.6.
4 Eccli. 19.2.

eyes shall behold strange women: and thy heart shall utter perverse things.'[5] The Apostle Paul also admonishes us against the vice of drunkenness when he says: 'Do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery.'[6] Again and again we have shown you clearly by the evidence of sacred Scripture the evil of drunkenness for those who love it. In the Book of Solomon we read: 'He that loveth wine and fat things shall not be rich.'[7] Moreover: 'Give not wine to kings: because there is no secret where drunkenness reigneth: and lest they drink and forget the judgments of God, and pervert the cause of the children of the poor.'[8] Similarly:[9] 'A workman that is a drunkard shall not be rich'; and: 'if thou drink wine moderately, thou shalt be sober'; finally: 'Wine was created from the beginning to make men joyful, and not to make them drunk. Wine taken with moderation is the joy of the soul and the heart. Wine taken with excess is infirmity of the soul and the body; it raiseth quarrels, and wrath, and many ruins. Wine taken with excess is bitterness of the soul. Drunkenness is heat, the stumbling-block of the fool, lessening strength and causing wounds.'

(6) Now, when we give this advice, perhaps drunkards will get angry and murmur against us. However, although there are sure to be some who get angry, there will be many who through God's goodness willingly listen to this salutary advice. By the mercy of God these men will be freed from their serious sin. On the other hand, may those who get angry when we speak against their friend and constant companion, drunkenness, freely listen to us. We must assert that if the drunkard does not do penance for his vice, but persists in it until death, he will surely perish forever, because the Holy Spirit does not lie when He says through

5 Prov. 23.31-33.
6 Eph. 5.18.
7 Prov. 21.17.
8 Prov. 31.4.5.
9 Eccli. 19.1; 31.32; 31.35-40.

the Apostle: 'Nor will drunkards possess the kingdom of God.'[10] So, then, drunkards would do better if they became angry at themselves instead of at us. With God's help they ought to hasten, while there is still time for repentance, to shake themselves free from the muddy dregs and the sewer of drunkenness. Then, with the Lord assisting them, they should arise as fast as they can and with all their strength beseech the Lord in the words of the Prophet:[11] 'Draw me out of the mire, that I may not stick fast,' and, further: 'let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the deep swallow me up: and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.' Drunkenness, indeed, like a pit of hell, violently takes over all whom it attracts, unless suitable penance and subsequent amendment save them. Moreover, it does not allow them ever to return from the dark pit of hell to the light of goodness and sobriety.

(7) We ought to understand and realize above all that men do not become drunkards in a single day. With the encouragement and compelling force of those who are most cruel enemies rather than friends, they gradually add one or two cups a day to the usual amount of drink. As soon as they put this into daily practice, the passion of drunkenness takes such a strong hold on them that it makes them thirsty all the time. However, if a man wants to get rid of this vice, he should return to the light of sobriety by gradually decreasing the amount of drink, just as he arrived at the darkness of vice by adding to it at certain intervals. If he tried to remove all at once what he took in excess, he would begin to burn up with thirst and cry out most bitterly that he preferred to die rather than give up his habit of getting drunk. Furthermore, he does not understand that it would be much better for him to die bodily than to kill his soul with drunkenness. Therefore, as I already said, to avoid the

10 1 Cor. 6.10.
11 Ps. 68.15,16.

excessive heat of passion and to free himself from serious sin, let him take away something of the excess in drink at definite times, and in this way return to a reasonable habit of drinking. If a man decreases the amount gradually, as we said, he will both be freed from his vice and will not endure the unbearable burning of passion.

(8) By giving this advice, dearly beloved, I satisfy my obligation before God. If anyone scorns to hear me and either is himself disposed to drink or wants to encourage and compel others to do so at his banquets, he will be guilty on his own and their account at the day of judgment. Moreover, because, what is worse, even some clerics who should prohibit it, themselves force others to drink to excess, they should from this very moment begin to correct themselves and reprove others. Then, when they appear before the tribunal of Christ, they will not incur punishment for their own drunkenness or that of others. Instead, by amending their own lives and ceaselessly rebuking others they may merit to obtain an eternal reward. I especially entreat you and adjure you by the day of judgment to reject from your feasts the poison of the Devil. By this I mean the shameful practice whereby three men are accustomed to drink in great measure without measure, whether willingly or not, whenever they give a banquet for each other. That is an unfortunate practice which is still retained from pagan practice. If anyone consents to it at his own feast or that of another, he may be sure that he has sacrificed himself to the Devil. Not only is the soul killed by this kind of drinking, but the body is weakened, too. However, I believe that in His mercy God will inspire you to acquire such a horror of this sad and shameful vice, that you will never allow it to happen. May whatever would have been lost through drunkenness now avail to refresh the poor, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon 47

Another Admonition against the Evil of Drunkenness

(1) With paternal devotion, dearly beloved, I have frequently reminded your charity that you should avoid and flee from the evil of drunkenness as a pit of hell. Although our reproof helped many, there are still quite a few men who neither fear God nor respect those who are honorable and sober. These people drink so much that they must by vomiting relieve their stomach, which is overloaded with excessive drink. Like ships that are shattered and wrecked, they are harassed by dreadful waves of drunkenness, so that they neither know where they are nor can say or hear anything at all which is reasonable. Such is their nature that, when they satiate themselves with too much wine, these miserable, drunken creatures ridicule and censure those who reasonably want to drink only in moderation. They say: Blush and be ashamed! Why can't you drink as we do? They say, indeed, that the others are not men. Now, consider the misery of those who are drunk. They say they are men when they lie in the sewer of drunkenness, while the others, because they stand upright and sober, are not. Those lying prostrate are men? Those who stand up straight are not men? One who has overcome drunkenness is blamed, while one who has been overcome by it is praised. The sober man who has control over himself and others is ridiculed, while the drunken man who does not know himself or others is not ridiculed; indeed, he is not even deplored.

(2) Drunken persons usually want to excuse themselves by saying: Someone more powerful forced me to dring too much, and I could not do otherwise at his banquet or the king's. We allege that, 'to make excuses in sins,'[1] when we

1 Ps. 140.4.

say we could not do what we do not want to fulfill. Our reluctance is at fault, while we allege our inability. Even if you arrived at the point where it is said to you: You will either drink or die, it would be better for your body to be killed in sobriety than for your soul to die through drunkenness. However, that excuse is given falsely. Truly, kings and leaders of every kind are, through the goodness of God, Christlike and prudent. Because they are sober and fear God with their whole heart, if they saw you determined through fear of God not to consent to become drunk, perhaps they would seem to get angry at the time, but afterwards they would defend you with great admiration, saying: How we treated him, with what threats and terrors we harassed him, yet we could not tear him away from sobriety! God, too, who sees you unwilling to become drunk, out of love for Him, will Himself grant you the favor of those who seemed to encourage or compel you to drink too much. Let no one say, dearly beloved, that there are no martyrs in these days; martyrs are born every day. A martyr, indeed, is a witness. Therefore, if anyone bears witness to the truth and judges all cases with justice, God will consider as martyrdom everything that he endures in testimony of the truth and justice. Similarly, if a man resists drunkenness and with God's help wishes to persevere, suffering tribulations for that purpose, God will count all these things toward the glory of martyrdom.

(3) Moreover, dearly beloved, if a man has many servants, I would like to know whether he wants one of them to be a drunkard? Doubtless, there is no one who has ever wished it or will do so. With what feelings, with what kind of a conscience, then, will a man who does not want to have a drunken servant be willing to get drunk himself? Behold, you possess a servant as one of God's gifts, and God has you as His servant. Just as you want your servant to obey you, so you, too, should serve your Lord. Tell me, I beg you, whether it seems just to you that you should possess a sober servant,

when God has a drunken one? If, then, you think you are worthy of the obedience of a sober servant, do you think God is unworthy of such a servant in you? Therefore, listen to this carefully, dearly beloved, and reflect that it is not just for us to do to God what we are unwilling to have happen to us. Perhaps you will say: How do I do to God what I do not want done to me? Listen how: You do not like to have a drunken servant, but you are unwilling to serve God in sobriety.

(4) For this reason, dearly beloved, men get drunk so readily, because they think that drunkenness is only a small sin or none at all. For this ignorance, however, priests especially will render an account on the day of judgment if they refuse to preach continually to the people entrusted to their care what great evils arise from drunkenness. If, then, a man thinks that drunkenness is a small sin and does not amend his life by doing penance for it, he will be tortured by eternal punishment without any relief, along with adulterers and murderers. As you well know, the blessed Apostle said long ago: 'Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor the effeminate, nor sodomites, nor the covetous, nor adulterers, nor drunkards will possess the kingdom of God.'[2] Notice that he linked drunkards with fornicators and idolaters and sodomites and adulterers. Again, we read: 'Do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery.'[3] Therefore, let each one determine and inwardly consider that drunkenness is a serious sin; then it will never or only with difficulty be able to overcome him. Not only in the future life are men to be tormented for drunkenness, but even in the present one they are often harassed by many infirmities. Those who do not think about the salvation of their soul may fear bodily disease. Those who do not fear the punishments of hell may dread cataracts and mists before their eyes, dizziness of the

2 1 Cor. 6.9,10.
3 Eph. 5.18.

head, or a trembling of their limbs. Moreover, we say this not only to the laity, but also to the clergy, for (so much the worse!) there are many even in the higher ranks of the clergy who, although they should continually preach to others the good of sobriety, fail to do this. In fact, they do not blush or fear to get drunk and even to cause others to do so. If there are any of this kind, let them realize and bewail it, because if they are unwilling to amend they will have to endure eternal punishments both for themselves and for others.

(5) When the banquet is ended and their thirst satisfied, they cannot and should not drink any more. However, as if starting all over again, together with any people who may have come unexpectedly at that hour, they begin to drink under various pretexts. They drink not only in the name of living men, but even of the angels and the rest of the older saints, thinking that they are paying them the highest honor by burying themselves in excessive drink in their name. They do not know that no one inflicts so serious an injury upon the holy angels or saintly men as those who, by drinking in their name, clearly kill their own souls by drunkenness. There are some people who for this reason alone order things to be made very salty, in order that by this very seasoning they may be able to bury themselves in excessive intoxication. It is not a matter for wonder or grief that pagans who do not know God do this, because they have no hope in God and observe the ancient customs of their fathers. Christians, however, God has brought back from darkness to the light and from death to life, and all the Scriptures cry out to them to flee from drunkenness and to love sobriety. Why, then, do they imitate the exceedingly shameful drunkenness of those from whose treachery they have merited by God's grace to be freed? Therefore I beseech you, and by the dreadful day of judgment I adjure you to fly with the Lord's help from the evil of drunkenness as far as you can. Let it begin to be

a source of shame to you that until now you have been willing to show yourselves like heathens and pagans in disgraceful drunkenness. Since by God's goodness you are unlike them in faith, you should not be like them at all in drunkenness. Indeed, even if Christians do not commit other sins, drunkenness alone, if repeated, casts men into the depths of hell, unless amendment and repentance save them. As we read: 'Drunkards will not possess the kingdom of God.'[4] But someone says: I do not want the kingdom of God; I only want to obtain eternal rest. Let no one deceive himself, brethren, for there are two places, but not a third. If a man does not merit to reign with Christ, without any doubt he will perish with the Devil.

(6) Finally, anyone who becomes a spiritual enemy of his friend by offering excessive drink clearly both weakens his body and kills his soul. It would be better to recall that friend to a banquet on two or three days, out of what he forces him that one day to take beyond what he should. With the drink whereby he weakens him on one day by excess, he might refresh him on the other days by a satisfying portion. Thus, he would not waste the drink or deceive his friend. Or surely, whatever gluttony by excessive drinking will lose, might still better be given as an alms for the poor. Thus the body would be refreshed by drinking in a moderate fashion, and the soul's redemption might be procured through mercy to the poor. Indeed, we have not uttered this reproof for the benefit of those who are honorable and sober, for we know that through God's goodness many people prepare frugal, moderate banquets. Therefore, you who out of love for God drink only what you ought make it your business that what the drunkards lose on earth you will store up in heaven by almsgiving. Let it not be enough for you that you are honorable and sober, but as far as you are able reprove and rebuke drunkards in such a way that they may never drink

4 1 Cor. 6.10.

excessively in your presence. When you love sobriety and by your advice recall others from the perdition of drunkenness you prepare a double reward for yourself in eternal happiness, through your own salvation and that of others.

(7) How sad and shameful it is, dearly beloved, that some country folks, when they have had wine or held other feasts, are said to invite their neighbors and relatives to drink as if to a wedding feast. As a result, they bury themselves in excessive drunkenness, and do not return to their own homes after this gloomy drinking spree before draining the whole draught which the host had. What he might have used to refresh himself and his entire family in a reasonable manner for two or three months he consumes in four or five days by sad and shameful drinking. Dearly beloved, when with humility and great love I give you this advice in accord with my paternal solicitude, I satisfy my conscience before God. Whoever willingly listens to me and devoutly tries to fulfill what I have preached will have an eternal reward. If anyone despises it, let him fear that he will endure unending punishment. However, we trust in the mercy of God that all drunkards will return, with the grace of God, from the evil of drunkenness to the good of sobriety. Thus they will both give us joy and will merit to arrive happily at their eternal reward. Amen.

Sermon 48

An Admonition Showing that from the Beginning of the World the Scriptures Have Always Blessed the Humble, but Curse Those Who Persevere in Pride

(1) In sacred Scripture, dearly beloved, the poor are unceasingly blessed, while sinners seem worthy of reproach. Therefore, first of all, as you realize from your frequent

reading and chanting, I will suggest to your charity a few sentences in which the Scriptures bless the poor; then I will mention what we read concerning sinners. Of the poor it is said: 'This poor man cried and the Lord heard him.'[1] And again: 'Blessing I will bless her widow: I will satisfy her poor with bread.'[2] Again: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[3] Again: 'To thee is the poor man left: thou wilt be a helper to the orphan.'[4] And again: 'For the Lord hath heard the poor.'[5] Conversely, of sinners we read: 'The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the nations.'[6] Again: 'Because the wicked shall perish.'[7] And again: 'Break thou the arm of the sinner and of the malignant.'[8] Again: 'In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture; all the sinners of the earth shall drink of it.'[9] And again: 'I will break all the horns of sinners.'[10] In all the Scriptures sentences of this kind abound, in which the poor are praised, whereas harsh words are directed to sinners.

(2) Since this is true, perhaps someone considers and says: How is the command given to us in sacred Scripture: 'Bless and do not curse,'[11] and 'nor the evil-tongued will possess the kingdom of God,'[12] and 'bless those who persecute you'?[13] How can the same Scriptures which forbid us to do so, curse so often? Those curses, dearly beloved, are not spoken by a person desiring their fulfillment, but merely foretelling the fact. They do not want this to befall sinners, but, because

1 Ps. 33.7.
2 Ps. 131.15.
3 Matt. 5.3.
4 Ps. 9b.14.
5 Ps. 68.34.
6 Ps. 9.18.
7 Ps. 36.20.
8 Ps. 9b.15.
9 Ps. 74.9.
10 Ps. 74.11.
11 Rom. 12.14.
12 1 Cor. 6.10.
13 Rom. 12.14.

they doubtless will come to pass, these curses are proven to be prophecies. If, then, sinners recognize that they are such, they should quickly have recourse to the healing remedies of repentance if they want to be blessed rather than cursed by the sacred Scriptures. If, perchance, they persevere in their sins and death overtakes them unexpectedly, all the curses which are found in Scripture since the beginning of the world may befall them, so that they cannot be freed from everlasting punishment.

(3) However, brethren, when the poor are blessed and sinners cursed in sacred Scripture, one who carefully notes the meaning realizes that it does not refer to all sinners or to all the ragged poor. In the sinners whom Scripture seems to curse we do not understand all sinners, but only the proud, who not only do wrong but even do not blush to defend their evil with impudent boldness. These are the people of whom it is written: 'Let the proud be ashamed, because they have done unjustly towards me.'[14] And this: 'Thou wilt bring down the eyes of the proud,'[15] and 'The proud did iniquitously altogether,'[16] and 'God resisteth the proud.'[17] Innumerable are the testimonies of this sort in which the arrogance of the proud is designated. Therefore, whenever you hear sinners cursed in Scripture, understand it concerning the proud, as I said, that is, those who defend their sins. Likewise, as often as you hear the poor praised, do not consider it with regard to all the poor, but only those Christians who are meek and humble of heart. Of these it is written: 'Upon whom shall my spirit rest, but upon the humble and meek, upon him that trembleth at my words?'[18]

(4) Indeed, many poor people are irascible and proud, so that it does not benefit them to be poor in earthly wealth since they are rich in vices and evil habits. Moreover, many

14 Ps. 118.78.
15 Ps. 17.28.
16 Ps. 118.51.
17 Prov. 3.34.

rich people are humble and gentle, of whom we read: 'Blessed is the man that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in treasures,'[19] and this: 'he hath distributed, he hath given to the poor: his justice remaineth for ever and ever.'[20] How does the lack of riches benefit a poor man if he has the desire for possessions? The Apostle does not condemn one who possesses riches, but one who longs for them, when he says: 'Those who seek to become rich fall into temptation and a snare of the devil.'[21] Therefore, what is the benefit of not possessing wealth, if a man burns with ambition? How, I repeat, is it profitable for a poor man to be poor, as long as he prefers to be proud rather than to be humble? Moreover, how can abundant riches harm a man, if he possesses perfect humility? Such a man does not desire to be a slave to dissipation because of his money, but wishes with all his heart to give alms and to observe humility and meekness. In short, as I said, all the Scriptures praise the humble poor and reprove the haughty rich. An eternal reward is promised the poor, while endless punishment is threatened to the proud rich in these words: 'Render a reward to the proud,'[22] and 'God will abolish the memory of the proud,'[23] and 'pride is hateful before God.'[24] If, perchance, there is someone who glories in his religious practices and good works without humility, he should pay careful attention and tremble with fear, because pride deposed an archangel from heaven. If so great a creature was cast down, do you who are dust and ashes hope to rise to heaven in pride? Therefore, each one should examine his conscience and, if he perceives that the vice of pride dominates him, he should have recourse to the remedy of humility. If anyone wishes to persevere to the

18 Isa. 66.2.
19 Eccli. 31.8.
20 Ps. 111.9.
21 1 Tim. 6.9.
22 Ps. 93.2.
23 Eccli. 10.21.
24 Eccli. 10.7.

end of his life in pride, he will have to endure the punishments of hell together with the Devil whom he imitates, for we read: 'They that trust in pride shall fall.'[25] If those who have less money and are poor want the blessing of all the Scriptures to be applied to them, they should observe true humility and hear the Lord saying: 'Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'[26] Furthermore, let them fear what is written: 'Before the Lord every man that exalteth his own heart is unclean.'[27] From what I have mentioned you realize clearly that it does not help the poor to be so if they refuse to be humble, while the fact that they are rich does not harm the wealthy if they endeavor to exercise humility, mercy, and justice.

(5) There are two kinds of men, the humble and the proud, and, like two peoples, they have been established in two cities since the beginning of the world. One of these is called Jerusalem, which is interpreted as the vision of peace, while the other is Babylon, which is interpreted as confusion. Christ builds the one; the Devil, the other. Now, all those who wish to persevere in pride belong to Babylon; those who will remain in humility belong to Jerusalem. All the saints and the Scriptures have blessed and continue to bless those who are humble, in the words: 'Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to the upright of heart.'[28] However, those who are proud have been and continue to be cursed. Therefore, as I have said, let each one turn to his own conscience. If a man perceives the root of pride to be dominant in himself, while he can and the time for doing good is still within his power, he should with God's help uproot the pride and implant humility as fast as possible; for he knows definitely that all the good works he has performed cannot benefit him as long as the swelling of pride

25 Prov. 11.28.
26 Matt. 11.29.
27 Prov. 16.5.
28 Ps. 124.4.

remains. Let him not be content merely to lift up its branches as it were, by a false and feigned humility, but let him try to tear the root out of his heart if he wants to please Him who deigns to inspect the heart. If a man refuses to do this, he will be subject to the curses of all the Scriptures, and there will be fulfilled in him the words: 'The Lord who is just will cut the necks of sinners'[29] and 'He shall rain snares of fire upon sinners.'[30]

(6) When sinners hear this sentence they should tremble and say: If the just Lord will cut the necks of sinners, how can we who are sinners escape? Far be it from them to despair of the Lord's goodness, for the divine Mercy immediately welcomes us if repentance and amendment follow. Moreover, in this instance He wanted proud sinners to be signified, because they defend their sins. They are even praised by their colleagues and are told: You have acted well and prudently. You are glad to reply in this way and to defend yourself because you seem to have overcome man. You do not bewail the fact that you have been conquered by the vice of pride. How much better it would be to follow the humble Christ than through pride to be trodden on by the feet of the Devil. 'The Lord will cut the necks of sinners.' Learn from the member in which they are struck that we should not and cannot think of all sinners, but only of the proud. We do not read: 'The Lord who is just will cut' the hands or the feet of sinners, but 'the necks of sinners.' Why is this? Because all the proud are stiff-necked. Therefore, realize that only the proud will be struck with this blow. Those who are humble should thank God and remain in humility to the end of their lives. Thus, the blessing of the angels and patriarchs and prophets and apostles and all the Scriptures will come upon them, as is given to all who persevere in humility. With those blessings they will reach eternal rewards, while

29 Ps. 128.4.
30 Ps. 10.7.

there will be fulfilled in them the words: 'The blessing of the Lord is upon the head of the just.'[31] Those who recognize that the tyranny of pride rules them should, as we suggested before, reject the surge of arrogance which destroyed the Lord's temple within their very selves, and should hasten to establish a foundation of true humility within their hearts. By this humility they will merit to rise to glory, since by pride they had fallen into ruin.

(7) While we are talking about cursing the evil of pride and seeking the virtue of humility, perhaps someone reflects and says: Why is it that in this sermon mention is made of only those two things and nothing is said about charity, the foundation of all good things, and avarice, the root of all evils? We include them in this sermon, dearly beloved, because, truly, those two cannot exist without these two. Avarice never could or can be found without pride, or charity without humility. Therefore, the man who praises humility also advocates charity which is its source; on the contrary, one who rebukes pride at the same time condemns avarice which is its necessary complement. Charity and humility are, as it were, two wings by which humble souls are lifted up to heaven, and if one is lacking the other is of no benefit. Similarly, on the opposite side, avarice and pride are like two fetters by which the unhappy souls of the haughty by God's just judgment descend into the depths of hell, even though they are lifted up with pride. Therefore, whenever you hear the praises of humility in sacred Scripture or in any kind of preaching, recognize in it a commendation of charity. Likewise, on the other hand, understand the reproach of pride as a condemnation of avarice. Moreover, since pride is born of avarice and humility springs from charity, they are joined so closely to each other that each mother cannot exist without her daughter. If a man desires to be freed from the vice of pride, he should first try to destroy avarice from

31 Prov. 10.6.

which it originates. So, on the contrary, if a man continually wishes to obtain true humility, he should endeavor faithfully to observe charity, its mother. With all our strength let us beg God's mercy to deign to free us from the vice of pride and avarice, and in pity to bestow upon us the virtue of humility and charity. Thus, we may not descend into hell by imitating the Devil who is the author of pride, but may merit to ascend into heaven by following Christ, the teacher of humility. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 49

How the Widows, Orphans, and the Poor in Scripture Are to Be Interpreted

(1) In sacred Scripture, dearly beloved, widows, orphans, and the poor are frequently mentioned with benediction, as we read in the psalms: 'Blessing I will bless her widow, and I will satisfy her poor with bread'; furthermore: 'He will support the fatherless and the widow' and 'this poor man cried and the Lord heard him.'[1] When you hear all this, understand it as concerning the entire Catholic Church, and concerning all in the holy Church who are good, humble, merciful, just, modest, chaste, and sober. Although God takes care of widows, orphans, and the poor, and willingly hears them if they are humble, in sacred Scripture the entire Church is interpreted in their likeness. All who live in such a way as to obtain eternal life are always blessed like the widow, the poor, or the orphan. Why is the Church regarded as a widow except that Christ her husband seems to be absent? That spouse, I say, of whom the Apostle says to the Church:

1 Ps. 131.15; 145.9; 33.7.

'I betrothed you to one spouse, that I might present you a chaste virgin to Christ,' and: 'let every man love his wife, just as Christ also loved the Church.'[2] Why is the Church considered poor, except because she is humble and does not place her hopes in the honors or wealth of this world but in the Lord God alone? Of this we read: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[3] Why is the Church represented by orphans unless because our Lord and Saviour Himself has said: 'Call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven.'[4] Now, just as orphans who have no father to be proud of are humble, so also in the Church, are not the good necessarily and willingly humble and mild? Even if such men possess honors or wealth of this world they do not show it haughtily, for they do not place their hopes in uncertain riches. For this reason they are solicitous for the poor as well as for themselves. They seem to be stewards rather than possessors of their riches, and from their own resources feed even themselves reasonably among the rest of the poor.

(2) So, then, under the title of widows, orphans, and the poor the Church is understood of those who are good, just as those who are wicked are designated by the name of sinners and the proud. All who are proud should realize that since the beginning of the world they have been, are, and should be rebuked in all kinds of publications. However, in both the Old and New Testaments all the humble and mild have been, are, and should be blessed, because He does not lie when He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'[5] Everywhere in Scripture you hear it said: 'The wicked shall be turned into hell,' and: 'because the wicked shall perish,' 'let their eyes be darkened that they see not.'[6]

2 2 Cor. 11.2; Eph. 5.25.
3 Matt. 5.3.
4 Matt. 23.9.
5 James 4.6.
6 Ps. 9.18; 36.20; 68.24.

As often as you hear these and similar words recited of sinners, understand that they do not refer to everyone but only to the proud and those who merely pretend to do penance. As we read in the psalms: 'Thou wilt save the humble people, but wilt bring down the eyes of the proud,' and: 'let the proud be ashamed, because they have done unjustly towards me.'[7]

(3) Let us be poor, brethren, that is, meek and humble; let us also be fellow widows of the one of whom we read: 'Blessing I will bless her widow.' Let us have no resource but in God, so that we may be poor in spirit, of whom it is added: 'I will satisfy her poor with bread.'[8] On the other hand, the Apostle says of the rich: 'Charge the rich of this world not to be proud, or to trust in the uncertainty of their riches, but in the living God.'[9] What, then, should they do with their riches? That follows: 'Let them be rich in good works, giving readily, sharing with others, and thus providing for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, in order that they may lay hold on the true life.'[10] As long as they do not seize the true life, they are poor; as soon as they do, they will be rich. You ought to know, dearly beloved, that all who wish to lead a good life are rich in Christ; likewise, all who are humble of heart and practice a twofold charity God counts among His poor, even if they possess riches in this world. Indeed, blessed Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, even Joseph, David, and many other saints of the Old Testament were rich, and their riches did not harm them. In the New Testament, too, Zachaeus was rich, as well as Cornelius a centurion; also wealthy was that other centurion of whom the Lord said: 'I have not found so great a faith in Israel.'[11] Although these men were rich, they deserved to be counted among God's poor and blessed and to receive eternal happi-

7 Ps. 17.28; 118.78.
8 Ps. 131.15.
9 Cf. 1 Tim. 6.17.
10 1 Tim. 6.18,19.
11 Matt. 8.10.

ness, because they did not place their hopes in their riches but in the living God. On the contrary, many ragged poor people are inflamed with too much ambition and are frequently lifted up with a spirit of pride as far as they can. Now, just as riches cannot harm those who do not rely on them, so poverty cannot help those who are daily tortured with the desire for possessions. Dearly beloved, let us be humble, so that we may have fulfilled in us the words: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'[12] May He deign to grant this, to whom are honor and power, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 50

On Seeking Health of Soul Rather Than of Body, and on Avoiding Soothsayers

(1) You know, dearly beloved, that all men seek bodily health, but this we should acknowledge, that, although health of body is good, health of the heart is much better. Consequently, all Christians should always pray especially that God will deign to grant them health of soul because of their devout life. We should pray for bodily health, but doubly and many more times for health of soul. Not too much harm is done if the flesh is weak in this life; it is of utmost importance that the soul rise unstained to heaven. Indeed, the person who feels anxiety for his bodily health alone is like the animals and wild beasts. What is still worse, how many there are who grieve if they begin to grow infirm in body. However, if they are not only wounded, but even die in soul, they do not feel it at all and do not grieve! If only they would run to the church even when they are sick in

12 Matt. 5.3.

body and ask for healing from the mercy of Christ. What is deplorable is that there are some who seek soothsayers in every kind of infirmity. They consult seers and divines, summon enchanters, and hang diabolical phylacteries and magic letters on themselves. Often enough they receive charms even from priests and religious, who, however, are not really religious or clerics but the Devil's helpers. See, brethren, how I plead with you not to consent to accept these wicked objects, even if they are offered by clerics. There is no remedy of Christ in them, but the poison of the Devil which will not cure your body but will kill your poor soul with the sword of infidelity. Even if you are told that the phylacteries contain holy facts and divine lessons, let no one believe it or expect health to come to him from them. If some people have recovered their health by these charms, it was the Devil's cunning that did it. Sometimes he has taken away bodily infirmity because he has already killed the soul. The Devil, indeed, does not want to kill the body as much as the soul. To try us he sometimes is permitted to strike our bodies with some infirmity; then, when we later agree to enchanters and phylacteries, he may kill our soul. For this reason the phylacteries sometimes seem to have power and beneficial effects; when the Devil has affected the soul with its consent, then he ceases to trouble the body. Anyone who makes these phylacteries or asks to have them made, as well as all those who consent to it have become pagans, and unless they perform sufficient penance they cannot escape punishment. However, brethren, ask health from Christ who is the true Light. Hurry to church, be anointed with holy oil, and receive the Eucharistic Christ. If you do this, you will receive health of soul as well as of body.

(2) Let us reflect with a penetrating mind, dearly beloved, and by a careful investigation let us examine our actions, lest, perchance, the Evil Spirit secretly insinuate himself into our souls. Even if he cannot openly seduce us, let him not

deceive us by the outward appearance of goodness. Truly, 'he has a thousand ways of harming us,'[1] and he uses them all for the deception of mankind. 'We are not unaware of his devices,'[2] says the Apostle. Christ Himself rebuked the Pharisees who wore phylacteries when He said: 'For they widen their phylacteries and enlarge their tassels.'[3] It would be better to keep the words of God in one's heart than to wear them in writing on one's neck. Indeed, concerning those who carry their bonds it is said: 'Such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord shall lead out with the workers of iniquity.'[4] Again we read: 'Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.'[5] Truly, it will be eternal happiness and a happy eternity to behold in perpetual vision Christ as God with His saints in glory, and to praise Him unceasingly. Then may there be fulfilled in us the words: 'The God of gods shall be seen in Sion' and 'blessed are they that dwell in thy house, O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever.'[6]

(3) Above all, brethren, do not consent to use deceitful values and false measures to trick your neighbors or friends, because it is written: 'With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you.'[7] Moreover, when you hear cases, render a just decision and do not accept bribes at the expense of the innocent; lest, while you are acquiring material gains, you lose eternal rewards. When you stand in church do not busy yourself in idle gossip with your neighbor. What is worse, there are people, some men but especially women, who talk so much in church that they neither hear the word of God themselves nor allow others to do so. Whoever does this will have to render an account on judgment day both for themselves and others. Remember, further, that you are

1 Vergil, *Aeneid* 7.338.
2 2 Cor. 2.11.
3 Matt. 23.5.
4 Ps. 124.5.
5 Matt. 5.8.
6 Ps. 83.8,5.
7 Matt. 7.2.

responsible before God for the sons you adopt at baptism. Therefore, you should always reprove and rebuke them, so that they may strive to observe whatever belongs to justice and chastity, sobriety, and even mercy. Arouse them to good works by example as well as by words, so that by imitating what is just and pleasing to God in you, they may merit to arrive with you at eternal rewards.

(4) I repeatedly exhort you, dearly beloved, I urge you with paternal devotion, and with all my strength I beg all who are among you to practice at all times devout and happy perseverance in good works. As we read: 'He who has persevered to the end will be saved.'[8] If there are those among you who realize that they are doing evil, they should correct and amend their lives. Then, when judgment day comes, by perseverance in good after amending their evil they may also reach eternal rewards, with the help of Him who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 51

Concerning Those Who Seek to Have Children by Evil Practices

(1) Some men and women, dearly beloved, when they see that they have no children in their married life, often become too sad. To make matters worse, they often are prevailed upon to believe that they can have children like the sap of trees, not from God but from some kind of impious drug. If anyone, deceived by a friend of the Devil, has done this, he should do penance with great compunction of heart; whoever with the Lord's help has not done so should see to it that he never does. Not only should a man refrain from it

8 Matt. 10.22.

himself, but to the best of his ability by his salutary advice he should not allow others to do it either. If God does not want to give them children, devout Christians should not suffer too much mental anxiety. When God grants children we should thank Him, and if He does not give them we should nevertheless thank Him, because He knows best what is good for us.

(2) Many people have children to their own harm, and many are without them for their own good. Although this is not universal, there are very many who condemn their children's souls to eternal poverty while they store up too much treasure for them on earth. Because they want to leave their children rich in this world by robbery and fraud, they not only neglect to distribute alms but also try to seize their neighbor's wealth. It is to be feared that although their children abound in their riches in this world, they themselves will be destroyed by eternal punishment. The Gospel account tells us what happened in the case of the rich man who was clothed in purple and left his brothers wealthy. That man who had been rich in this world and had robbed his brothers of all their wealth asked in his burning thirst for a drop of comfort when he was in hell, and he could not obtain it. Now, all those who have no children, or, at least, almost all of them, since they have no one to whom they will leave their earthly wealth, constantly redeem their souls by the generosity of their alms. When they pass from this world to eternal bliss, they will be without anxiety, and freed from evil will deserve to hear: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom, for I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'[1]

(3) No one should be sad or grieve over his lack of children when he sees so many priests, monks, or religious persevere in God's service to the end of their lives without earthly children. They will receive a greater crown and more glory because they have willed to be physically barren, fulfill-

1 Cf. Matt. 25.34,35.

ing what Christ proclaimed through His Apostle: 'It remains that those who have wives be as if they had none. The time is short; I would have you free from care.'[2] Those who practice physical sterility should observe fruitfulness in souls, and those who cannot have earthly sons should endeavor to beget spiritual ones. All our deeds are our sons; hence, if we perform good works every day we will not lack spiritual sons. These sons of ours not only will never die, but furthermore will not allow their parents to die eternally. However, when earthly sons reach manhood it is difficult for most of them not to desire the death of their parents. We have not said this because we believe that all children are wicked, nor do we want to persuade anyone who is married to be unwilling to have children. As we mentioned above, whether God wants to give us children or not we should thank Him, because He knows best what is good for us.

(4) Therefore, those to whom God is unwilling to give children should not try to have them by means of herbs or magic signs or evil charms. It is becoming and proper for Christians especially not to seem to fight against the dispensation of Christ by cruel, wicked boldness. Just as women whom God wants to bear more children should not take medicines to prevent their conception, so those whom God wishes to remain sterile should desire and seek this gift from God alone. They should always leave it to divine Providence, asking in their prayers that God in His goodness may deign to grant what is best for them. Those women whom God wants to bear children should take care of all that are conceived, or give them to someone else to rear. As many as they kill after they are already conceived or born, before the tribunal of the eternal Judge they will be held guilty of so many murders. If women attempt to kill the children within them by evil medicines, and themselves die in the act, they become

2 1 Cor. 7.29,32.

guilty of three crimes on their own: suicide, spiritual adultery, and murder of the unborn child. Therefore, women do wrong when they seek to have children by means of evil drugs. They sin still more grievously when they kill the children who are already conceived or born, and when by taking impious drugs to prevent conception they condemn in themselves the nature which God wanted to be fruitful. Let them not doubt that they have committed as many murders as the number of the children they might have begotten.

(5) Therefore, let us consider the words of the Apostle: 'We do not know what we should pray for as we ought.'[3] Let us always entrust ourselves to God's judgment and mercy, and not strive to have contrary to His will what He does not want to give. Thus, while we seek the comfort of earthly children, let us not lose eternal rewards. Let us, then, continually say with our whole hearts in the Lord's Prayer: 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.'[4] If we devoutly put our hopes in God's providence, we win His favor in this life and will confidently appear before Him with a clear conscience in the life to come. May He deign to grant this, to whom is honor and glory world without end. Amen.

Sermon 52

On Martyrs, the Eclipse of the Moon, Abortions, and Phylacteries

(1) I repeat again as I have freqently admonished you, dearly beloved, that no one of you should think that martyrs cannot live in our times. Martyr is a Greek word, which in

3 Rom. 8.26.
4 Matt. 6.10.

Latin means a witness. As we have often said, anyone who bears witness to Christ for the sake of justice is without doubt a martyr. Likewise, anyone who resists the champions of dissipation and persecutors of chastity out of love for God will receive the crown of martyrdom. Therefore, there are martyrs even in our day. If a man reproves evil-doers with justice and charity, or warns against the indiscriminate taking of oaths, perjury, calumny, and slander, he will be Christ's martyr by giving testimony to the things which please God. Moreover, one who restrains men from observing omens, wearing phylacteries, or consulting magicians and seers is known to bear testimony to Christ when he speaks against these temptations of the Devil.

(2) Besides, dearly beloved, the temptation of our Adversary is not slight when foolish men think that days and months, the sun and the moon, should be worshiped. What is worse, so true is what we are talking about that not only in other places but in this very city there are said to be some unfortunate women who refuse to spin or weave on Thursday in honor of Jove. In such people baptism is violated and the sacraments of Christ suffer injury.

(3) How is it that foolish men think they should, as it were, help the moon in its eclipse? When its shining orb is covered at certain times by a natural condition of the air or is suffused with the nearby heat of the setting sun, they think that there is some conflict of incantations against heaven. This they imagine they can overcome by the sound of a trumpet or the ridiculous tinkling of bells that are violently shaken, through the vain persuasion of pagans believing they make the moon friendly to themselves by their wicked shouting. Now, since at God's bidding it renders service to rational man, why does man render foolish obedience to it, to the insult of God? Let every wise and pious man, we beg you, avoid and detest these errors, or, rather,

this madness, this shameful mockery. If the substance of this heavenly body is inferior to you, why do you fear to offend it by your silence? If it is superior to you, why do you think it needs your help?

(4) Does not the Devil clearly exercise his deceits still further, dearly beloved, when he persuades some women, after they have had two or three children, to kill either any more or those already born, by taking an abortion draught? Apparently, such women fear that if they have more children they cannot become rich. For, what else must they think when they do this, except that God will not be able to feed or direct those whom He has commanded to be born? Perhaps some are killed who could serve God better or obey those same parents with a perfect love. Instead, by an impious, murderous practice women take poisonous draughts to transmit incomplete life and premature death to their children through their generative organs. By such an exigency they drink a cup of bereavement with the cruel drug. O sad persuasion! They maintain that the poison which has been transmitted through their drinking is unconnected with them. Moreover, they do not realize that they conceive in sterility the child which they receive in death, because it was conceived in their flesh. However, if there is not yet found a tiny infant that could be killed within the womb of its mother, it is no less true that even the natural power [of generation] within the woman is destroyed. Why unhappy mother—or, rather, not even the step-mother of a new-born son—why did you seek, from outside, remedies that would be harmful for eternity? You possess within you more salutary remedies, if you wish. You do not want to have a child? Settle a pious agreement with your husband; let him agree to an end of child-bearing in accord with the virtue of chastity. Only the sterility of a very pious wife is chastity.

(5) Dearly beloved, it is also due to the deadly cleverness of the hidden Persecutor, as we have said before, that

mothers in grief and terror hasten when their sons are troubled with various trials or infirmities. What is worse, they do not entreat the Church's remedy, the author of salvation and the Eucharistic Christ. Nor, as it is written that they should, do they ask the priests to anoint them with blessed oil, or place all their hopes in God. They act in the opposite manner, so that while they seek bodily health they effect the death of souls. If only they would seek that health from the simple skill of doctors! However, they say to themselves: Let us consult that soothsayer, seer, oracle, or witch. Let us sacrifice a garment of the sick person, a girdle that can be seen and measured. Let us offer some magic letters, let us hang some charms on his neck. In all this the Devil has one aim: either to cruelly kill the children by abortion, or to heal them still more cruelly by the charms.

(6) Sometimes, women who are apparently wise Christians, when their children are sick, reply to nurses or other women through whom the Devil suggests these practices: I will not get mixed up in such things, because it is read in church: 'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils.'[1] Then, as if excusing herself, such a woman says: Go, and do as you know how; no expenses from our storehouse will be denied you. As if by these words she could be held innocent of such a detestible crime! This is not the case. Not only the mother who permits it, but also the others who consent to it, incur the guilt of sin, as the Apostle says: 'Not only they who do these things, but they also who consent to those who do them.'[2] If you are willing to listen carefully, both men and women, and faithfully endeavor to avoid and flee from all the snares of the Devil, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ you will be able to arrive at eternal happiness with a clear conscience.

1 1 Cor. 10.20,21.
2 Cf. Rom. 1.32.

Sermon 53

An Admonition to Destroy the Shrines of Idols

(1) It is a source of pleasure to us, dearly beloved, to see you faithfully coming to church, and for this we give the greatest thanks to God. Truly, this is becoming and proper for Christians, to hasten like good sons to their mother the Church with the greatest longing and true piety. But, although we rejoice at this, dearly beloved, to see you hasten faithfully to church, we are sad and we grieve because we know that some of you rather frequently go over to the ancient worship of idols like the pagans who have no God or grace of baptism. We have heard that some of you make vows to trees, pray to fountains, and practice diabolical augury. Because of this there is such sorrow in our hearts that we cannot receive any consolation. What is worse, there are some unfortunate and miserable people who not only are unwilling to destroy the shrines of the pagans but even are not afraid or ashamed to build up those which have been destroyed. Moreover, if anyone with a thought of God wants to burn the wood of those shrines or to tear to pieces and destroy the diabolical altars, they become angry, rave with fury, and are excited with excessive frenzy. They even go so far as to dare to strike those who out of love for God are trying to overthrow the wicked idols; perhaps they do not even hesitate to plan their death. What are these unfortunate, miserable people doing! They are deserting the light and running to darkness; they reject God and embrace the Devil. They desert life while they follow after death; by repudiating Christ they proceed to impiety. Why, then, did these miserable people come to church? Why did they receive the sacrament of baptism—if afterwards they intended to return to the profanation of idols? Truly in them is fulfilled what was

written: 'The dog is returned to his vomit: and the pig to his wallowing in the mire.'[1] They do not fear what the Lord said through His Prophet: 'He that sacrificeth to gods shall be put to death, save only to the Lord';[2] moreover, in the psalms: 'All the gods of the Gentiles are devils, but the Lord made the heavens'; and again: 'Let them be all confounded that adore graven things, and that glory in their idols.'[3]

(2) Therefore, brethren, whoever you are who have not done such wrong to the loving Christ, see to it that you never do so. Be careful lest those desperate, wicked men overwhelm you, and lest after Christ's sacraments you return to the poison of the Devil. Rather, rebuke whomever you recognize as such, admonish them quite harshly, chide them quite severely. If they are not corrected, strike them if you can; if they are not corrected thus, pull their hair. If they still continue, tie them with bonds of iron, so that a chain may hold those whom Christ's grace does not hold. Then, do not permit them to restore the shrine, but endeavor to tear to pieces and destroy them wherever they are. Cut the impious wood down to the roots, break up the altars of the Devil. Moreover, know this, dearly beloved, that when he is baptized every man is separated from the following and army of the Devil. However, if later on there is a return to the practice of that impiety which we mentioned before, Christ is immediately deserted and the Devil again takes hold. It would have been a less serious matter not to come to Christ than afterwards to desert Him, according to what the Apostle Peter says about the matter: 'It were better for them not to have known the way of justice than, having known it, to turn back.'[4]

(3) We are saying, brethren, what is expedient for you.

1 2 Peter 2.22.
2 Exod. 22.20.
3 Ps. 95.5; 96.7.
4 2 Peter 2.21.

Eternal punishment will torture without any remedy whoever is unwilling to observe this. Some like to get drunk, some to commit adultery, others to entice the innocent, but afterwards they will not like to burn in eternal flames. Look, brethren, observe what we are saying, for no one can say that he was not warned. See how we shout and testify and preach; do not despise your herald if you want to avoid the Judge. However, concerning God's mercy, we believe that He intends to give perseverance in good works to you, the faithful. Those who have committed some impiety He will inspire to hasten to do penance. Thus, by persevering in good after having been reformed from evil they will equally deserve to arrive at eternal bliss: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns world without end.

Sermon 54

An Admonition to Those Who Not Only Pay Attention to Omens, but, What Is Worse, Consult Seers, Soothsayers, and Fortune-Tellers in the Manner of Pagans

(1) You well know, dearly beloved, that I have frequently exhorted you with paternal solicitude, advising and proclaiming that you should by no means observe those wicked practices of the pagans. However, as I hear reported of many, our admonition has not profited some individuals. If I do not speak about it I will have to render an evil account on judgment day for both of us, and I, together with you, will have to endure eternal punishments. Therefore, I acquit myself before God if I admonish you repeatedly and assert that none of you should consult sorcerers, seers, or soothsayers, questioning them for any reason or infirmity. No one

should summon charmers, for if a man does this evil he immediately loses the sacrament of baptism, becoming at once impious and pagan. Unless generous almsgiving together with hard, prolonged penance saves him, such a man will perish forever. Likewise, do not observe omens or pay attention to singing birds when you are on the road, nor dare to announce devilish prophecies as a result of their song. No one should set any store on certain days for leaving home and certain days for returning again, because God made all the days. As Scripture says: 'And there was made the first day,'[1] also a second and third in like manner, then a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and a sabbath; and 'God made all very good.'[2] And do not pin any faith on or pay any attention to the both impious and ridiculous [interpretation of] sneezes. As often as there is need for you to hurry, sign yourself in the name of Christ, devoutly recite the Creed or Lord's Prayer, and go on your way secure in God's help.

(2) If under God's inspiration you scorn and despise all those impious practices, the Devil will not accept this willingly. When he sees you leave his friendship and society, despising the evil with which he deceived you, he is going to do other villainy to you, perhaps cause some infirmity or take away one of your animals through disease or wandering. God allows this to happen to find out whether you are coming to Him with devotion, wholeheartedly despising the Devil's inventions, and whether His love or the loss of an animal has more weight with you. If with your whole strength and complete fidelity you despise the wickedness which the Devil inspires, God will deign to keep the Devil himself from attacking you and he will never be able to deceive you with his cleverness. However, even if men who are careless and easily swayed, with weak wills and a tepid faith, begin, they do not persevere in the works of God. When they refrain

1 Cf. Gen. 1.5.
2 Gen. 1.31.

from the evil practices that have been indicated and allow even one of the Devil's tricks, they immediately repent of their conversion to God and abandonment of the Devil's inventions. Such men return again to the observance of omens, as dogs to their vomit. You, however, to whom God has given wisdom and true faith, should despise with all your heart the illusions of the Devil, and faithfully be converted to God. Then you will patiently and courageously endure whatever the Devil wishes to send you, saying with blessed Job: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done.'[3] With the Apostle, too, you may say with a firm and generous heart: 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or persecution, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or the sword, or danger?'[4] Good Christians are not separated from Christ even by torture. Tepid and careless ones, however, are sometimes separated from Him by idle tales; if they suffer even a slight loss they are immediately scandalized, dare to murmur against God, and return to their impious, detestable omens.

(3) Perhaps someone says: What are we to do, for the magicians and seers often announce true omens to us? Concerning this the Scriptures warn and advise us: Even if they tell you the truth, do not believe them, 'For the Lord your God trieth you, whether you fear him, or not.'[5] Again you say: Sometimes many would run the risk even of death from the bite of a snake or some infirmity if there were no magicians. It is true, dearly beloved, that God permits this to the Devil, as I already mentioned above, to try Christian people. Thus, when they sometimes are able to recover from sickness by these impious remedies, men see some truth in them and afterwards more readily believe the Devil. However, if a man wants to practice the Christian religion with all his

3 Job 1.21.
4 Rom. 8.35.
5 Deut. 13.3.

heart, he should despise all these things with all the strength of his soul, fearing the Apostle's rebuke: 'You are observing days and seasons; I fear for you, lest perhaps I have labored among you in vain.'[6] Behold, the Apostle says that one who observes omens receives his teaching to no purpose. Therefore, avoid the Devil's tricks as much as you can.

(4) Above all, brethren, know that the Devil cannot injure you, those who belong to you, your animals, or the rest of your earthly substance even in small matters, unless he receives his power from God. Just as he did not dare to destroy the wealth of holy Job without the Lord's permission, so we read in the Gospel that when the demons were driven out of men they asked to be allowed to enter swine. I beseech you to consider this, brethren. If the demons did not dare to enter swine without receiving the Lord's permission, who would be so perfidious as to believe they can harm good Christians in any way unless God allows it in His providence? God permits this for two reasons: either to try us, if we are good, or to punish us, if we are sinners. However, if a man patiently endures the dispensation of the Lord—and, as I already said, when he loses something says: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord'[7]—he will receive a crown for his patience that is pleasing to God if he is just, and forgiveness if he is a sinner. Notice, brethren, that when the Devil had destroyed all the earthly substance of blessed Job, Job did not say: The Lord gave, the Devil hath taken away, but 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.' That holy man was unwilling to give the Devil the glory of being able to take away anything that the Lord had not permitted him to remove. Since the Devil could not have injured the children, youths, camels, asses, or sheep of blessed Job before the Lord gave His permission, why do we

6 Gal. 4.10,11.
7 Job 1.21.

think that he can do to Christians more than the divine power allows in its just and secret judgment?

(5) Therefore, since we believe most certainly that we can lose nothing but what God allows to be taken away, let us cling to His mercy with all our heart, and after faithfully abandoning impious observances let us always presume upon His help. If a man believes in the aforementioned evils—magicians, seers, soothsayers, phylacteries, and other omens—it profits him nothing even if he fasts, prays, continually runs to church, gives generous alms, and afflicts his body with every sort of mortification, as long as he does not abandon those impious practices. That impious, wicked observance ruins and destroys all those good actions to such an extent that they cannot profit men when they wish to exercise good works along with those evils. What the Apostle says is true: 'A little leaven ferments the whole lump,' and 'you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils.'[8] Moreover, the Lord says in the Gospel: 'No man can serve two masters.'[9] Therefore, Christians should not fulfill vows to trees or adore fountains, if by God's grace they desire to be free from eternal punishment. So, if a man has any kind of shrines on his land or in his country house, trees or altars near his estate where miserable men are wont to fulfill such vows, if he does not destroy them and cut them down, he will doubtless be a participant in those impious practices which are carried on there. How is it that when those trees where vows were fulfilled are cut down no one takes the wood of them for his hearth? See the misery and foolishness of men: they pay honor to a dead tree, but despise the commands of the living God. They do not dare to throw the branches of a tree into the hearth, but by their wickedness they cast themselves into hell. If anyone does not

8 1 Cor. 5.6; 10.20,21.
9 Matt. 6.24.

practice this evil, he should rejoice and thank God, faithfully striving to persevere in good works. However, if anyone has surrendered himself as the Devil's captive by these devilish practices, he should do penance with all his heart. He should flee and despise those aforementioned evils in all horror, so that God may grant him pardon and make him arrive at eternal bliss for the glory of His name.

(6) It further occurs to me that some people, through either simplicity or ignorance or, what is certainly more likely, gluttony, do not fear or blush to eat of that impious food and those wicked sacrifices which are still offered according to the custom of the pagans. For this reason I exhort you, and before God and His angels I proclaim, that you should not come to those devilish banquets which are held at a shrine or fountains or trees. Moreover, if anything from them comes to you, shudder and reject it as if you saw the Devil himself; refuse it in such a way that you do not permit anything from such an impious feast to be brought into your home. As the Apostle says: 'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; you cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils.'[10] Although some are accustomed to say: I sign myself and then eat, no one should presume to do this. If a man signs himself on the lips and puts a sword into his heart, then, just as the body is slain with a sword, so the soul is killed by that evil food. However, we trust in God's mercy that He will deign to inspire you to do what is right, so that the wickedness of the Devil may never overtake you in omens or the other impious practices and prophecies which were mentioned above. Thus, you will place all your hope in God, seeing that you never return to those abominable evils which are included above: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might for ever and ever. Amen.

10 I Cor. 10.20,21.

Sermon 55

A Sermon in Reproof of Those Who Commit Many Sins Through Drunkenness on Feast Days and Accept Bribes in Hearing Cases at the Expense of the Innocent

(1) It is a source of great joy to me, dearly beloved, and I thank God that you come to church with pious devotion on the holy feasts. Although we rejoice at your devotion through God's goodness, there are many more whose ruin causes us sorrow. I am speaking of those who desire to quarrel rather than to pray when they come to church. When they ought to be receiving the divine lessons in church with attentive ears and entire devotion, they strive to plead cases outside and to assail one another with different tricks. Sometimes, what is worse, they are inflamed with excessive wrath, quarrel bitterly, and hurl disgraceful insults and accusations at each other; at times, they even fight each other with fists and boots. It would be better for such people not to come to church than to provoke the divine wrath against themselves by such evils. Although they come to church with but slight offenses, they return from it with many sins. Therefore, although my soul rejoices at your devotion, I beg you who are good and sober, who exercise justice, love chastity, and practice mercy, to be indulgent with me and bear with patience the fact that I must reprove the careless and tepid. When these latter come to a solemnity they are so busy with idle gossip that they do not receive the divine lessons in church with a devout heart.

(2) There are some people who come to the birthday festivals of the martyrs for this sole purpose, that they may destroy themselves and ruin others by intoxication, dancing, singing shameful songs, leading the choral dance, and pantomiming in a devilish fashion. While they should be doing

the work of Christ they are attempting to fulfill the service of the Devil. Not love of God but love of dissipation brings such people to the feast, because they do not prepare themselves to give an example of good works or for the remedy of faith, but for the poisonous snare of the Devil. If anyone wants to look for and imitate these men, they condemn themselves to eternal punishment.

(3) There are also some who wish to plead or hear cases on the birthday of the saints or some other feast; what is worse, they do so not in true charity but for the sake of avarice or ambition. Of course, cases must be pleaded and weighed with justice, but on other days and at another time, not on the solemnity of the saints when all men should have time for God and engage in prayer rather than assail each other in different quarrels. Some accept little gifts and presents, and endeavor to corrupt just cases, as the Prophet says: 'Putting darkness for light, and light for darkness: saying what is sweet is bitter, and what is bitter, sweet.'[1] Therefore, they hear cases and decide them unjustly. They accept earthly gifts and lose eternal rewards; gaining money, they lose eternity. O miserable man, if you have done this or do it or attempt it, you pay attention to what you are acquiring but do not notice what you lose. By acquiring gold you offend God, for while your money coffer is filled your conscience is weakened. In a few days or years your soul will leave your body; then the gold will remain in the coffer, but your unfortunate soul will descend into hell. However, if you had judged justly, refusing unhappily to serve avarice or dissipation, your soul would be lifted up to the kingdom full of God and your money box would stay in the world without gold. Therefore I beseech you, brethren, and I adjure you by Him who redeemed you with His precious Blood, observe justice in every case with all your strength, and think more carefully of the salvation of your soul.

1 Isa. 5.20.

(4) When you come to church, do not busy yourself with things in which you may acquire more sins. Do not be occupied with disputes but with prayer, so that you may not offend God by quarreling but may obtain His grace by prayer. Do not drink in measure without measure; do not efface your names from heaven by drinking under pretexts. What is worse, there are many people who not only get drunk themselves but also beg others to drink more than is proper; moreover (so much the worse!), even some of the clergy do this. O unhappy soul, it is not enough for you that you yourself perish; in addition, you also destroy others. It is not enough for you that you sink down in the sewer of drunkenness; you drag still others along with you. It does not suffice for a miserable drunken man to plunge himself into the slough of intoxication, without attempting to involve others with him. Do not commit this evil, brethren, do not! Listen to the Apostle when he says: 'Nor will drunkards possess the kingdom of God,'[2] and again: 'do not be drunk with wine, for in that is debauchery.'[3] As often as you come to church for the feasts of the martyrs, store up in heaven by almsgiving what you used to squander through gluttony or drunkenness. When you come to a festivity or to Mass and stand in church, listen with joy and devotion to the divine lessons; moreover, remember what you hear and with God's help endeavor to fulfill it. Do not busy yourself with idle gossip in church, and do not engage in useless conversation. Indeed, there are many, especially some women, who chatter idly in church so much that they neither hear the divine lessons themselves nor allow others to do so. Women who do this will have to render an evil account to the Lord both for themselves and others. Above all, do not plead or hear cases on feast days. And as often as this is done at other times, as I said, each one should see to it that he does not

2 1 Cor. 6.10.
3 Eph. 5.18.

change the just case of another into his own evil punishment by accepting bribes. If anyone gives unjust decisions he will receive a pecuniary gain but incur the loss of his soul; for he comes to hear the case innocent but departs guilty. A man who does this should not deceive himself, for in him is fulfilled what we read: 'With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged.'[4]

(5) Perhaps when we preach these truths some people will get angry at us and say: The very ones who preach this fail to observe it; even bishops, priests, and deacons do many such things. Indeed, brethren, this sometimes is true. So much the worse, even clerics who are accustomed to get drunk do not blush to corrupt just cases, plead them on feasts, quarrel, and engage in business transactions. However, are they all to be condemned because a few wicked ones are found? We are not proclaiming these truths only to the laity who are in the world, but also to the clergy, and even to ourselves. We censure ourselves so that if we have ever done this we may now amend our lives and never do so again, repenting of the past in such a way that we will always be solicitous for the future. When you tell me that I refuse to practice what I preach, you accuse me, to be sure, but you do not excuse yourself. However, even if I do not practice it, I still admonish you, for I do not want to be guilty of a double charge on judgment day. At the table of your heart I offer you the divine Law as if it were the money of my Lord; when Christ comes He will demand interest. Concerning careless priests, such as I am, the Lord spoke to the people: 'What they command you, do. But do not act according to their works, for they talk but do nothing.'[5] For my part, although I do not what is right, I impress upon your ears the precepts of our Lord and Saviour. However, God is powerful, so that when we pray He will grant you to willingly

4 Matt. 7.2.
5 Matt. 23.3.

hear what we say, and He will enable us to fulfill what we preach to you: who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 55A[1]

The Beginning of a Reproof by St. Augustine to Correct Judges on Feasts of the Saints

(1) It is a source of great joy to me, dearly beloved, and I thank God that you come to church with pious devotion on the holy feasts. Although we rejoice at your devotion through God's goodness, there are many more whose ruin causes us sorrow. I am speaking of those who desire to quarrel and revel, to get angry and plead cases, rather than to pray when they come to church. And all this happens at a time when they ought to be receiving the divine lessons in church with attentive ears and entire devotion and piety. . . . Sometimes even, what is worse, they are inflamed with excessive wrath and hurl disgraceful insults and accusations at each other. It would have been better for these people not to have been born than to provoke the divine wrath by such evils. Although they come to church with but slight offenses, they return from it with many sins. Therefore, although my soul rejoices at your devotion, I beg you who fear God, who desire to escape eternal hell, are sober, exercise justice, love chastity, and practice mercy, to be indulgent with me and bear me with patience. I must warn the careless and tepid that by flattery they are preparing themselves so the Devil may dwell in them and encourage them to pervert and destroy themselves. What is worse, when they are fettered to many sins the Devil even leads them to hell. These poor men had

1 Another version of the previous sermon, taken from Ms. T.

come to perform a work of Christ, and they are attempting to fulfill the service of the Devil. Not love of Christ but love of dissipation brings such people to the feast, for they have not come to fulfill a vow, but have determined to insult God and the saints. These miserable creatures do not know that eternal punishment awaits them. For this reason, I beseech you through the majesty of our Lord to grieve with me so that they may amend their lives and not perish.

(2) There are some judges or chief men who wish to plead or hear cases on the birthday of the saints or some other feast. What is worse, they do not do so in justice or charity, but for the sake of avarice and ambition. Of course, cases must be pleaded and weighed with justice, but on other days and at another time, not on a solemnity of the saints when all men should have time for God and engage in prayer. There are some judges who accept small gifts in order to destroy or sell justice. They do not realize that by those small gifts they are carried to hell. They take what belongs to another with joy, with the result that they lose their own souls. They do not understand the voice of the Devil saying: I support them, that is, I support them with gifts. It would be better to receive eternal life justly without such tokens than to incur endless punishment with unjust talents. Truly the holy Apostle asserts that the wages of sin is death. Devout soul, if you do this, I beg you to amend your life before the one who will carry you off comes and there will be no one to rescue you. Such people accept earthly gifts, while they lose eternal rewards. Therefore, all of you who have done this or do it or attempt it, pay attention to what you are acquiring but do not notice what you lose. You consider gold beautiful, but do not fear the foul and fetid fires of hell. While you make gold your patron you arouse the wrath of God's majesty, for your money coffer is filled and your soul weakened. In a few years or days your soul will leave your body. Then the gold may remain in the coffer, while

your unfortunate soul descends to eternal punishment. If you had judged justly, refusing to serve avarice or dissipation unhappily, your holy and chaste soul would be lifted up to the kingdom, and your money box would stay in the world without gold.

(3) I beseech you, and I exhort you through Him who redeemed you with His precious Blood, to help yourselves while you can. Free yourselves from the Devil's seduction while you are still alive. Think more diligently of the salvation of your soul while you have the time, and through alms send ahead something that you may possess forever. You will be demanded of me, and all the saints of the Church will maintain with me that these words proclaimed the truth to you. Therefore, do not be occupied with disputes, do not get drunk or efface your names from heaven by drinking under pretexts. What is worse, there are many people who not only get drunk themselves, but also beg others to drink more than is proper. Moreover (so much the worse!), even some of the clergy do this. O unhappy soul, is it not enough for you that you yourself perish? So you also destroy others? Do not keep concubines, and do not commit adultery or fornication, because 'Neither drunkards nor adulterers will possess the kingdom of God.'[2] Therefore, dearly beloved, listen to the word of the Lord of majesty, who has commanded us to fear these things and to observe His holy precepts, in order that we may live forever through our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself wants no one to be lost. For this reason He proclaims through His sacred Scriptures that no one should make himself perish through gluttony, dissipation, or deceitfulness. As often as you come to church for the feast of the martyrs, store up in heaven by amendment and almsgiving what you used to squander through gluttony or drunkenness. When you come to church do not busy yourself with gossip, for one who does this will have to be punished in his tongue. If a

2 1 Cor. 6.10.

man talks to another in church he cannot obtain interiorly what he asks for himself. Therefore, heed this admonition if you want to escape hell.

(4) Perhaps, when we preach these truths, some people will get angry at us and say: The very ones who preach this fail to observe it: even priests do many such things. What is worse, this sometimes is true. There are priests who are accustomed to get drunk, corrupt just cases, and do not blush to quarrel. Such men do not know that they are not priests, but impostors. Therefore, let us, both clergy and laity, hasten to amend our lives. We suggest this now before the one who will carry you off comes and there will be no one to save you, before the fire surrounds you without anyone to extinguish it. For this reason, dearly beloved, listen, and let each one be converted from his evil ways. May we repent of the past in such a way that we are always solicitous for the future. When you tell me that I refuse to practice what I preach, you accuse me, to be sure, but you do not excuse yourself. However, even if I do not commit these faults I still admonish you, for I do not want to be guilty of a double charge on judgment day. At the table of your heart I offer you the divine Law, for when Christ comes He will demand interest for the money entrusted to me. Concerning careless priests like myself, the Lord said to the people: 'All things that they command you, do. But do not act according to their works; for they talk but do nothing.'[3] For my part, although I do not what is right, I impress upon your ears the precepts of our Lord and Saviour. However, the Lord is powerful, so that when we pray He will grant you to willingly hear what we say, and He will enable us to fulfill what we preach: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

3 Matt. 23.3.

Sermon 56

A Necessary Admonition of St. Faustus on Judgment Day with Its Punishment of the Wicked and the Glory of the Good; in Addition, the Fact that Even the Laity Can and Should Do Penance Daily Without Changing Their Life's Work

(1) I exhort you as I have frequently done, dearly beloved, to endeavor always to think of the day of our death and the terrible, dreadful judgment. No more useful remedy for the wounds of all sins can be found than for each one to think of the hour when he will leave this world. How can a person dare to commit serious sin if at every moment he thinks he might be departing from this life? Thus, Scripture says: 'Remember, son, that death is not slow,' and 'remember thy last things, and let enmity cease.'[1] If a man carefully heeds how difficult his examination will be before the tribunal of Christ, when 'everyone' will be treated 'according to his conduct,'[2] his own sins and faults will not be able to cause him pleasure. When all the people are gathered together before that dreadful Judge, what will be 'the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth'[3] on the part of a wicked, greedy adulterer? When the multitude of the just are placed at the King's right hand for glory, the sinner will see himself plunged into the depths of hell without any hope of pity or pardon, and in darkness separated from the blessed light of the saints. Going down into the endless depths of the abyss which forces him to enter its jaws, he will behold eternal punishment and eternal death, though he himself is destined never to die. In vain will he ask for mercy from the poor he has despised in

1 Eccli. 14.12; 28.6.
2 Matt. 16.27.
3 Matt. 8.12.

this life. To no avail will he plead for the tip of the finger of Lazarus to touch his parched lips and refresh him in his burning fever. When he sees the glory of the poor, how the miserable man will wish he had subjected himself to the rigors of poverty and had suffered the trials which came to him in life, so that he would not merit to receive these eternal punishments!

(2) In order that we may not deserve to hear such a harsh and terrible sentence before the tribunal of the eternal Judge, let us examine our consciences while through God's goodness it is still within our power to do so. If we see that there still are some sins and offenses not yet purified by almsgiving and prayer, under the direction of Christ let us hasten to overcome the waves of sin and enter the harbor of repentance. Moreover, if because of the repeated tempests of sin we discover anything in the skiff of our soul broken through pride or shattered by avarice, or destroyed by dissipation, let us hasten to settle or repair it. Let us always be zealous to remove the dregs of vice, for past sins are not harmful if they displease us. Just as none of the just is sufficiently good unless he perseveres to the end, so no sinner can be harmed by his sins if he has recourse to the remedy of almsgiving and the healing of repentance before departing from this life.

(3) Now, since we cannot know when or at what time we will be taken from this world, let us hasten without any procrastination or delay to go from the left side to the right. We should not trust our health or our years; a man who is always uncertain of his life is also swift to apply the remedy of his salvation. The same One who gave us assurance by the words, 'On what day soever the sinner is converted, all his iniquities will be forgiven,'[4] also wanted to make us careful when He said: 'delay not to be converted to the

4 Ezech. 18.21,22.

Lord: and defer it not from day to day.'[5] Perhaps, when we call everyone to penance in general, someone will reflect and say: I am young and married, how can I cut my hair or assume the religious habit? When we preach thus, dearly beloved, we are not saying that young married men should change their customary habit rather than their manner of life. How can a married man be harmed if he is willing to change his evil habits to good and noble works, and if by almsgiving, fasting, and prayer he is anxious to restore the wounds of his sins to their former healthy condition? For such a man it is enough to have a true conversion without any change of garments. However, the clothes of a religious without good works not only could bring no remedy, but would even suffer the just judgment of God. Therefore, while the remedy is still within our power, let us be converted to better things. Let us destroy death by dying to sin, and let us acquire true life by the merits of a good one: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermon 57

An Admonition Always to Think of Judgment with Great Fear and Anxiety

(1) I beseech you, dearly beloved, and I exhort you with great humility that no one of you get angry at me or think that I am unreasonable or foolish when I frequently and purposely strive to impress upon you the fearful and dreadful day of judgment. If anyone is displeased by this he should consider my danger and hear the Lord threaten priests in the terrible words of the Prophet: 'If thou declare not to

5 Eccli. 5.8.

the wicked his iniquity, I will require his blood at thy hand.'[1] In another place He says: 'Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their wicked doings.'[2] Perhaps someone says: Why are these harsh words repeated so constantly? Because it is better to endure this slight unpleasantness now, and later to attain eternal pleasure, than to possess a false joy here and there to suffer endless punishment. Listen, brethren, not to me but to the Lord when He says in the Gospel: 'Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted';[3] 'Woe to you who laugh now! for you shall mourn and weep.'[4] Moreover, notice that physicians of the body, whenever patients who are physically ill come to them, take away everything that seemed agreeable. What is pleasant for a well man is forbidden. For example, they do not allow the person to take anything cold, or sometimes they are compelled to drink very bitter medicines, and wounds frequently are cut with exceedingly rough or sharp instruments. What earthly doctors do for the sake of bodily health, spiritual physicians try to practice for the salvation of souls.

(2) When I consider these facts, dearly beloved, and when I realize fully that I shall have to render an account before the tribunal of the eternal Judge concerning both your and my salvation, I choose to prescribe remedies that are harsh, indeed, but for your own good. Thus, in company with the angels, may I afterwards merit to rejoice with you in perpetual health of soul. I am not repeating these words because I feel that you do not willingly listen to our admonitions. However, it is necessary for both your and my salvation that I preach frequently, and so I am eager to arouse your minds concerning the dreadful judgment and the desirable reward. Then, with the Lord's help, you will prepare the holy receptacle of your heart, as you have always done, to

1 Ezech. 3.18.
2 Isa. 58.1.
3 Matt. 5.5.
4 Luke 6.25.

store up a spiritual harvest. Whenever we preach something hard we do not do so because we believe that you have done something of the sort, but we denounce things that you have not done, in order to be able to cure those matters in which you may have been overcome. It often happens that we fear to do great wrongs, but more quickly fail to guard against slight ones. Just as theriaca is drunk to ward off poisons from the body, so austere preaching is done to serve as an antidote for souls.

(3) It is certain, dearly beloved, that if we always consider God's benefits toward us, which He conferred without any preceding merits on our part, sin will not have dominion over us, or, if it does overtake us, it will be corrected at once by repentance. Truly, who could conceive, much less express in words, the great goodness of our God toward us? He made us when we did not exist, He later restored us to life when we had perished. He suffered death, He delivered us by His precious Blood, He descended into hell, He snatched us from the jaws of eternal death, and He promised us eternal rewards. When we devoutly and piously consider all these things, dearly beloved, we should with His help hasten to repay these benefits as far as we can. Let us not return evil for good, but let us strive to the best of our ability faithfully to obey His will. Let us endeavor to have His precepts avail as a remedy for us by our compliance with them, rather than redound to our judgment because of our transgressions.

(4) What will we do on the dreadful day of judgment, dearly beloved, when the Lord will sit upon the throne of His majesty, surrounded by the light of the heavenly hosts? The world will tremble with fear and angels' trumpets will play before Him as mankind is raised up from the heart of the earth and from his former ashes. Each one's conscience will be there to testify, while the punishment of sinners and the reward of the just are placed before the sight of all. Then the Lord, now more just than merciful, will begin to demand

an account of each one's life. With the severity of a judge He will begin to accuse those who have been guilty of despising His mercy: With My own hands I made you out of the slime of the earth, O man. I put the breath of life into your material body, I deigned to confer upon you My image and likeness, I placed you in the delights of paradise. But despising My life-giving commandments, you preferred to follow the Deceiver rather than your Lord. However, I will omit those first details. Afterwards, moved by pity because you were driven from paradise by your sin and bound with the chains of death, I entered a virginal womb to be born without destroying that virginity. I was placed in a manger and lay there covered with swaddling clothes, suffering the outrages of infancy and human pain to become like you, in order that I might make you like Me. Then I bore the blows and spittle of those who mocked Me, and I drank vinegar mixed with gall. I was beaten with scourges, crowned with thorns, fastened to a cross, pierced with wounds, and died in agony, in order that you might be saved from death. Behold the imprints of the nails by which I hung affixed to the cross; behold My side pierced with wounds. I took upon Myself your sufferings to give you My glory; I took your death that you might live forever. I lay buried in a sepulchre so that you might reign in heaven. Why did you destroy what I did for you? Why, ungrateful soul, did you reject the gifts of your redemption? I am not complaining about My death, but give back to Me your life, in return for which I surrendered Mine. Give Me that life of yours which you continually kill by the wounds of your sins. Why did you defile with the filth of dissipation the dwelling which I consecrated for Myself in you? Why did you stain My body with shameful allurements? Why did you torture Me with the cross of your sins, a far heavier one than that on which I hung long ago? Indeed, the cross of your offenses, upon which I hang unwillingly, is much heavier than the one I

willingly ascended to die in your stead, out of pity for you. Although I am unchangeable, I became man for you; although unable to suffer, I deigned to do so for you. You, on the contrary, despised God in your fellow man, health of soul in the sick, reconciliation on the way, pardon in your judge, life in the cross, and healing in punishment. Since even after all your sins you were unwilling to have recourse to the remedy of repentance, you will not deserve to be freed from the evil hearing, but will have to hear with those who are like you: 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.'[5] Then you will go down into the eternal fire of hell, together with him whom you preferred to Me, because you were captivated by the pleasant snares and false goods of life.

(5) In order that we may be able to avoid this terrible reproach, let us without any excuses have recourse to the remedy of repentance whenever any sins overtake us. Then we will merit to be freed from the evil hearing and to obtain eternal forgiveness, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

*Sermon 58

A Fine Admonition by St. Faustus, Always to Think of Our Sins, the Judgment, and Eternal Happiness

(1) When the divine lesson was read just now, dearest brethren, we heard the blessed Apostle admonish us in dreadful yet salutary words when he said: 'All of us must be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has won through the body, according

5 Matt. 25.41.

to his works, whether good or evil.'[1] This the Lord also announced in the Gospel, saying: 'The Son of Man is to come with his angels in glory; and then he will render to everyone according to his works.'[2] I beg you to notice carefully, dearly beloved, and to tremble as I do because He did not say that He will render to every man according to His own mercy, but 'according to his works.' Here He is merciful; there, just. The fact that He does not punish sinners immediately indicates patience, not indifference. He has not lost His power, but He spares us for repentance. Therefore, we should be very much afraid that the longer He waits for our amendment, the more severely He will punish us if we are unwilling to be corrected. Since this is true, dearly beloved, we ought to know and understand that nothing is more salutary for us than to despise the pleasures of present things and think, rather, of the time when we will leave this world. On the last day of our life we will lay aside the tabernacle of our body, which will again be restored on the day of resurrection when together with it we will receive either good or evil, according as we have lived.

(2) Therefore I exhort you, brethren, to think daily about what our condition will be on judgment day when we are presented in the sight of the most pure angels and must give the eternal Judge an account based on the evidence of our conscience. It is certain that when his days of trial are ended man will have to stand up before himself and behold his soul in the mirror of his heart, while witnesses will be brought against him, not from outside, but within his very soul. Not the evidence of strangers will be produced, but that which is only too familiar, namely, his own works. His faults and sins will be lined up before his unhappy soul to overcome him with their evidence and to confound him with their knowledge. In the words of Scripture: 'I will reprove thee, and

1 2 Cor. 5.10.
2 Matt. 16.27.

set it before thy face.'[3] If a man neglects to amend his life while he may, he will first be punished with confusion before the people in heaven. Then his soul, which recently only pretended to heal the infection of its sins by the fruitful performance of penance, will remain wounded forever and without any remedy before that dreadful tribunal.

(3) Since this is true, we would do well to consider whether we should not repent of our sins now as we will then without any remedy. May we now behold and shudder at our hideousness and sins as we will see them then. Oh, if we could only see with our bodily eyes the appearance of a sinful soul and bring before our eyes the look of our conscience! If this were possible, we cannot describe the eagerness and fear with which we would be constrained to rearrange what is disfigured, to wash away the stains, and to heal our wounds. Now, since we cannot look with our bodily eyes, let us see with the eyes of our heart, as well as we can, and let each one of us place our conscience before the gaze of the inner man. Let us rebuke ourselves and account to ourselves for our daily life. Let each soul speak in the depths of his heart and say: Let us see whether this day has been spent without sin of envy or detraction or murmuring; let us see whether today I have done only what is conducive to the progress of my soul. I think that today I have lied or yielded to anger or concupiscence; I have not done good to anyone or sighed in fear of eternal death. Who can give me back this day, which I have wasted in frivolities and in harmful thoughts? Thus, brethren, let us be sorry 'upon our beds,'[4] that is, in our hearts, for all our failings. Let us condemn ourselves by daily accusing ourselves to our Judge. Moreover, as long as we are in the flesh let us with the Lord's help fight against it; let us overcome our self-will and evil inclinations. Then, when by a happy exchange that most

3 Ps. 49.21.
4 Ps. 4.5.

desirable and blessed day is transformed into eternal life, the Lord's word will be fulfilled: 'Men will be as angels,' and again: 'then the just will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'[5]

(4) Do you realize what the splendor of souls will be when the light of the body will possess the brightness of the sun? Indeed, when we reach that blessed state there will be no sadness or fear or infirmity or death. There will be no human weakness to keep us from serving God, no opposition of the miserable flesh to contradict us, no further need to fight. There will come that time, I say, when no refreshment of food or sleep will be desired, no weariness from fasting felt, no restlessness of the flesh or temptation of the Enemy feared. With our Adversary thrust down into the depths of hell, we will first enjoy this happiness of not having the will or the power to commit any more sin. When sin and misery and grief are ended, innocence and joy and happiness will completely hold sway. Inferior souls will not fear misery or the more fortunate, envy; for, when all wickedness is completely destroyed and annihilated, the charity of the angels will enter men's hearts. Having recovered their bodies, men in their heavenly state will mix with the angels and shine without any bodily infirmity. They will therefore experience no further surprise at the infinite virtue of their Lord, nor will they suffer any defect at the endless joy of their own praises. Among the immense benefits of our God we will enjoy perfect happiness, so that we will never tire of giving thanks to Him for having made us His co-heirs when He said: 'Come, blessed, take possession of the kingdom which was prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'[6]

(5) See what happiness a man will lose if he refuses to amend his life while there is still time for repentance. Such a man does not redeem himself by his own merits while they

5 Matt. 22.30; 13.43.
6 Matt. 25.34.

are still his, but, turning the remedy in his wounds, submits his unfortunate neck to avarice and wickedness. However, brethren, we for whom such happiness is prepared in heaven should with God's help scorn to serve sin. As long as we have the time and it is still within our power, let us reject false and transitory things in order to deserve to receive those which are truly good. Let us be emptied of vice and filled with virtue, for no one can receive goodness if he is unwilling to free himself from evil. Vases that are filled with mud cannot take or hold the substance of pure liquid; similarly, a thorny field does not nourish the seeds that are sown in it but chokes them, unless it has been cultivated by the industry of the planter. As it is written: 'The kind Holy Spirit will not dwell in a body subject to sins.'[7] While we sail on the stormy sea of this world let us hasten to drain the dregs of our vices, so that we may arrive at the land of paradise. May our soul, adorned with good works like a ship full of various wares, thus deserve to cast its anchor in the harbor of eternal bliss and join the company of the angels. There, freed 'from the evil hearing,'[8] may we deserve to hear those desirable words: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many; enter into the joy of thy master,'[9] with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Wisd. 1.4.
8 Ps. 111.7.
9 Matt. 25.21.

Sermon 59

ST. AUGUSTINE'S SERMON ON THE CONFESSION OF SINS. THAT THE DEVIL WANTS US TO REFUSE TO CONFESS THEM, SO THAT WE MAY APPEAR GUILTY BEFORE THE TRIBUNAL OF THE ETERNAL JUDGE; THAT GOD, ON THE CONTRARY, WANTS US TO CONFESS OUR SINS HUMBLY IN THIS WORLD, SO THAT WE MAY BE FREE FROM THEM IN THE WORLD TO COME

(1) In all the sacred writings, dearly beloved, we are told in a useful and salutary manner that we should continually and humbly confess our sins both to God and to His holy, God-fearing servants. Thus the Holy Spirit advises us through the Apostle James, saying: 'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved.'[1] The Psalmist, too, exclaims: 'Give praise to the Lord, for he is good,' and 'I said I will confess against myself my injustice to the Lord, and thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my heart.'[2] Just as we can never be without the wounds of sins, so we should never lack the remedy of confession. God wants us to confess our sins, not because He Himself cannot know them, but because the Devil longs to find something to charge us with before the tribunal of the eternal Judge and wants us to defend rather than to acknowledge our sins. Our God, on the contrary, because He is good and merciful, wants us to confess them in this world so we will not be confounded by them later on in the world to come. If we confess our sins, He spares us; if we acknowledge them, He forgives. The first man was not told: Confess your sin—because he had not committed anything to confess. He was told not to sin. However, he did not obey, but sinned; consequently,

1 James 5.16.
2 Ps. 117.1; 31.5.

we mortals are born in the bondage of sin. Since our misery is spread through the weakness of the human race, we are told: Confess your sin. Now, just as the Serpent then told man not to observe the command not to sin, so he now urges man not to obey the words: Confess your sin. As he then made the one who was standing fall, so he now tries to prevent the one who has fallen from rising. In opposition to the charms and snares with which he wants to impede our return, let us follow salutary teaching. Let us do this to oppose him who wants to prevent our confession of sin, because he knows that, as we have fallen through pride, we cannot return except by humility. He was our leader on the road of pride; let us now follow Christ, our leader, to humility.

(2) Through astrologers and Manichaeans that Serpent tells man that as man he should not confess a sin. By the astrologers it is said: Does a man commit sin? The stars were set that way; man had to do the wrong. Therefore it is asserted by the astrologers that a star makes man sin, that he does not do so by himself. In this way blasphemy is aimed at God because He is the creator of the stars. When a man is unwilling to blame himself for his actions, he accuses God by whom man was made. A similar idea is suggested by certain Manichaeans: You do not sin; the race of darkness commits sin, but you have no guilt. The soul is told this and lifted up to such a degree of pride that it thinks it does not commit sin. This does not remove, but doubles, the sin. Moreover, many people avoid confessing their sins by accusing Satan himself and saying they themselves have done no wrong. When some persons are rebuked and it is said to them: Why did you do it?—they reply that the Devil did it. There is nothing that gives the Devil more joy than when a man says he made him commit sin. When a man says: The Devil did it—he does not accuse himself, and so long as he refuses to confess his sins he does not deserve to receive pardon.

He says: The Devil did it—as though the Devil really dragged him into it or exercised violence. The Devil can persuade and urge a man, but he cannot compel him at all.

(3) Since with God's help it is in your power to decide whether you will consent to the Devil, why do you not think of obeying God rather than Satan? If you had to decide alone and God were silent, you might have an excuse. But, since both God and your conscience contradict you, and through sacred Scripture you hear in church that you should not do wrong, why do you choose death and desert life? Why do you prefer to follow the Devil in wickedness rather than to obey Christ who invites you to eternal life? I ask you, dearly beloved, why does the Devil induce you to sin, when God has put it in man's power not to consent to Satan? God, in a way, instructs us on the right hand and the Devil seduces us on the left, while man is placed in the middle. Why does he incline his heart toward the Devil? Why does he not rather lift it up to God? The Devil does not harm us by using force, but merely by his persuasions; he cannot extort consent from us, but can only ask for it. Let us not help the Devil, and we will conquer him. Indeed, he only gives advice, but with God's help it is for us to either choose or reject his suggestions.

(4) Listen to something else. When a man says that he was seduced by Satan, he partly confessed by saying he was seduced. However, he denies that he did anything by saying: I did nothing, the Devil did it. Adam tried to do that, too. He wanted to excuse himself by using the woman; the woman in turn wanted to excuse herself with the Serpent. The Lord God, however, who gave man his free will and by His teaching strengthened him against the Serpent's poison, did not listen to those excuses. Besides, He had given the woman to be taught by her husband, not to teach him. Both of their wills were so constituted and created free in such a way that, if there were a refusal to yield to the Serpent, con-

founded in his error he would leave them and man would remain strengthened in the Lord, his Creator. We have spoken evil words; the Serpent now wants to persuade us to excuse our sins. Before, he made you do something blameworthy; now, he wants to make you excuse your guilt. If you had confessed, God was ready to welcome you as though into an open fold; by making excuses you close the fold, you shut in the sin and exclude forgiveness of it. See what you have done. The sin has not been removed, as I said before, but the remedy for it has been cut off. God would have had to cure you with forgiveness if you had confessed your guilt. You are looking for an excuse for yourself, but He is not seeking someone to punish in your stead.

(5) Therefore, tell your pious heart what I mentioned a little while ago: 'I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me.' Why did I add: 'I said'? Because of the Manichaeans who say: You do not commit sin. Exclaim: 'I said: O Lord, be thou merciful to me: heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee.'[3] God will heal you if only you admit your wound. You lie under the physician's hands; patiently implore His aid. If He bathes, or burns, or cuts it, bear it calmly; do not even pay any attention to it, provided you are cured. Moreover, you will be cured if you present yourself to the doctor. Not that He does not see you if you hide, but confession is the very beginning of restoration to health.

(6) 'The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.'[4] What does this mean? It would be better for me if the just man who sees my sin would correct me, not spare me, tell me that I have done wrong, be furious over my sin, in order to free me from it. He would seem to speak harshly, but within he would be gentle in mercy, according to the words: 'The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove

3 Ps. 40.5.
4 Ps. 140.5.

me.' When the just man thus reproves and shouts and rages, he shows mercy, for it all arises from his paternal pity and not hostile cruelty. Moreover, since he does not want you to die in sin, he loves you all the more when he cuts; he is unwilling to allow your other members to decay from the rottenness of sin. He draws a blade, but do not be afraid or dread it. The knife is not applied against you, but against your wound. That is why it is said: 'The just man shall correct me in mercy, and shall reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner fatten my head.'

(7) What is the oil of the sinner but the adulation of a flatterer? If anyone sharply rebukes another, he seems to rave at his sin and freely to tell him what evil he has done. If the other person, perchance, imitates the one who is chiding him, he will also get angry at his sin. For this reason it is said: 'Be ye angry and sin not: the things you say in your hearts, be sorry for them upon your beds.'[5] If the truth is spoken, perhaps a man will be converted. Suppose another man comes to him and flatters him by saying: Why, you have acted in a praiseworthy fashion. 'For the sinner is praised in the desires of his soul: and the unjust man is blessed.'[6] If he is dissolute, he is called happy; if he is avaricious, it is said that he saves his money. He takes revenge on an enemy even though we are told: 'Forgive, and you shall be forgiven,'[7] and he is called strong. Consider the other words which flatterers use, deceitful speech, although it bears the name of praise: that is the ointment of the sinner. Moreover, let us listen to the Prophet when he says: 'My people, they that call you blessed, the same deceive you and destroy the paths of your feet.'[8] Therefore, when anyone's sin is freely mentioned by another and even flattered, if a third person sees it and asks what happened, are we not wont to answer: He spoke

5 Ps. 4.5.
6 Ps. 9b.3.
7 Luke 6.37.
8 Cf. Isa. 3.12.

the truth to him and did not flatter? What did the first person do? He anointed the head of his neighbor and withdrew. Now, if we are true spiritual physicians, brethren, and attend carefully to the remedy of your souls, we should not flatter anyone, nor should you do so to us. Let us confess our sins, not excuse them. You have done wrong and are guilty; confess it, and you will be forgiven. However, if you say: I did not do it—as often as you attempt to make excuses for the truth your sin remains in you and you are guilty. Besides, you are guilty not only of the sin which you committed, but also of pride because you refused to confess it. May the Lord deign to free us from this sin, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 60

An Admonition Showing the Difference between Penance Performed Continually with Good Works and That Which Is Accepted in Sickness or at the End of Life

(1) Many of our brothers and sons are anxiously concerned whether a man who repents in sickness and immediately dies can obtain complete forgiveness. Not only are there inquiries on the subject, but even contentions marked with considerable animosity. Some say that one who repents thus is forgiven entirely, while others say it does no good. I would like to suggest briefly to your charity what seems to be the fact of the matter according to the teaching of the holy Fathers. It can be fittingly believed that this sudden repentance is achieved in three ways. The first and foremost is for a Christian not to commit serious sins, and if, perchance,

he does so, to repent and wash them away by good works without later returning to the same offenses. He should give tithes of his profits, and with whatever remains of the nine-tenths after he has provided for his own necessities he should redeem the slight sins which daily overtake him. Moreover, he should observe the charity which loves enemies as well as friends. If a man is willing to fulfill this, he will die well because he has always fruitfully and devoutly done penance even though he does not formally receive it. If he does repent when he is about to die and shares the substance of his wealth with Christ and his children, we believe that he will not only obtain forgiveness of his sins but will also receive eternal rewards.

(2) The second type of the aforementioned repentance is that of a man who throughout his life perhaps commits serious sins as well as small offenses, but does so through ignorance rather than through a presumptuous hope of forgiveness. Such a man should not give way to sin with the idea of reserving himself for sudden repentance, but at his death seek repentance with moans and groans, at the same time definitely resolving to perform fruitful penance with all his heart and strength as long as he lives, provided that he survives. Furthermore, he should entirely return whatever he knows he has taken dishonestly, in accord with the Prophet's advice repairing the robbery. He should also wholeheartedly forgive all his enemies and share a portion of his earthly substance with Christ and his sons, while in sickness he should order generous alms to be distributed according to his means. If a man is willing to perform these things faithfully with a humble and contrite heart, we can and should believe that the Lord will deign to forgive his sins, as the Prophet says: 'On what day soever the sinner is converted, all his iniquities will be forgiven,'[1] and 'on what day soever you are converted, groaning, you shall be saved.'[2]

1 Cf. Ezech. 18.21.
2 Cf. Isa. 30.15.

(3) It seems that the third manner of repentance is that of one who always leads a bad life and reserves repentance for the end of his life. Such a man sins in the presumptuous hope and belief that all his sins will be forgiven by that sudden repentance. He does not duly return what he took unjustly, or forgive his enemies wholeheartedly, or mentally resolve that if he survives he will do penance all his life with great compunction and humility, or allot a portion of his substance to Christ and his children for the redemption of his sins. If a man repents and departs from this life without the remedies which we mentioned above, we hesitate to say what will happen to him, but the Lord has told us very definitely in the Gospel: 'If you do not forgive men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive you your offenses';[3] moreover: 'give, and it shall be given to you; forgive, and you shall be forgiven.'[4] How can a sinner be forgiven if he has been unwilling to forgive? Or how shall something be given to one who has not been generous? Furthermore, the Lord will say concerning those who have not given alms: 'Depart from me, accursed ones, into the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and you did not give me to eat,'[5] and so forth. Now, if one who has not given alms with his wealth is cast into the fire, what will become of the penitent who not only gave nothing of his own money but even refuses duly to return the goods of another which he has taken unjustly? If such a man asks for pardon and he has enough life left to be able to receive it, I can grant it, but I cannot give him perfect security. However, God who knows the consciences of all men will judge each one according to his merits, and He knows with what faith and intention of soul he has sought repentance. I fear that such a penitent will not have in his conscience

3 Matt. 6.15.
4 Luke 6.38,37.
5 Matt. 25.41,42.

any good works to show, because, even if we cannot see the heart, in the Gospel statement 'By their fruits you will know them,'[6] although we cannot see whether what we mentioned above is fulfilled interiorly. Since this is true, who will hinder our belief that one whom we know to have been lacking in good works did not depart from this life in a fine condition? See, I have explained to your hearts my views on sudden repentance. If any further doubt arises in your minds concerning what we have said, we would like very much to have you request an explanation with full confidence.

(4) Leaving uncertainties and doubts, dearly beloved, let us with all our strength consider more carefully that penance which is performed by good Christians throughout their lives in disapproval of all serious sins and in continual atonement for slight offenses. If we perform it all our lives together with good works, perfect security is promised to us in God's mercy. Since all men want to repent at the end of their lives, but we see a very few merit it as they wish, why do we not daily do penance, so that, possessing certainty, we may be freed from uncertainty and doubt? How many who thought they would repent at the end of their lives have been overcome by sudden disaster or perhaps drowned in a shipwreck or killed by lightning or a bloody blow or struck down by the sickness called apoplexy in such a way that they could not seek repentance; in fact, could not even make the Sign of the Cross or say the Lord's Prayer! Since human weakness is subject to such misfortunes, exceedingly dangerous is the presumption of reserving ourselves for repentance at a later date when we do not possess a single day of our life in our power. With fear and trembling, then, let us hear the Lord speak to us through the Prophet and warn us with pious exhortation: 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day.'[7] The same One who

6 Matt. 7.16.
7 Eccli. 5.8.

promised: 'On what day soever you are converted, groaning, you shall be saved,'[8] also said: 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord.'[9] With God's help we can obtain this if we continually pray that the good Lord may deign to inspire us quickly to flee from all sin and indefatigably to perform good works. We should not desire what belongs to another or commit serious sins, and by forgiving our enemies and alms to the poor we should continually redeem the slight offenses which we cannot avoid. Moreover, according to our strength we ought to engage frequently in fasting, vigils, and prayers with perfect charity, visit the sick and seek those in prison, welcome strangers, not only humbly washing their feet but also generously supplying their necessities as far as we can. Finally, we should not only observe peace with all men ourselves, but likewise should recall the discordant to harmony. If the day of our death finds us faithfully engaged in these good works, even if we repent at the very hour of death, as I said before, we will depart from this life with confidence. Then, with the Lord's help, we will be able not only to escape punishment but even to arrive happily at eternal life.

Sermon 61

An Admonition That, Since Sins Always Overtake Him, a Man Should Constantly Do Penance for Them and Not by Dangerous Excuses Defer This to the End of His Life

(1) I beseech you, dearly beloved, patiently and even willingly accept my fatherly words as you usually do. Through God's goodness you know that since it is not for some earthly

8 Cf. Isa. 30.15.
9 Eccli. 5.8.

gain but out of perfect love for you I must say and you must hear this, I will strive to advise you with great humility and fear. Moreover, dearly beloved, since not only slight sins but even greater offenses try to overtake us day and night, let us not reserve ourselves for a repentance which is accepted at the end of life, but as long as we live let us endeavor to do penance daily. This practice should be observed continuously, not only by the laity and clerics, but even by priests and monks. Indeed, a bishop who does penance every day can pray for me, but one who presumes upon his dignity and sanctity, refusing to do penance, will have to find someone to pray for him. Since we cannot spend a day without sin, what is the sense of gradually piling up slight offenses and thus making endless streams out of tiny drops? Despair arises from a multitude of sins which are heaped up for some time, according to the words: 'The wicked man, when he is come into the depth of sins, contemneth.'[1] Of course, you are all well aware that we can more easily uproot them when they are still young than cut them off when they are firm.

(2) To take an example from something that is daily before our eyes: Who is so useless and slothful today that he does not have his house swept every day? Who would allow his horses always to stand on their dung? I exhort you, brethren, to learn great matters from the smallest. Let it not seem unfitting to you that we mentioned sweeping a house. The Lord Himself spoke of this incident in the Gospel, for the woman who had lost the drachma deserved to find it as soon as she swept house. In the drachma is recognized a coin, and on the coin is seen the image of the emperor. Therefore, just as when the house is swept the image of the emperor is found on the drachma, so the image of the Creator is recognized in the soul when it is freed from the dirt of vice by fruitful repentance. For this reason, dearly beloved, realize that, as I said before, what I suggest is not

1 Prov. 18.3.

difficult or hard to understand. This I beg, that just as we clean our house by sweeping in order to please the eyes of our friends, so with God's help let us cleanse our soul from all sins so it will not displease the eyes of the angels. Into the dwelling of our soul not only angels but the Lord of the angels deigns to come, as He said: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man rises and opens to me, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me';[2] and: 'my Father and I will come to him and make our abode with him.'[3] How happy the soul which has been willing to cleanse the house of his heart from the defilement of sin and to fill it with holy and just works, so that the Lord may delight to dwell in it! Therefore, let us not be ashamed to do in our souls what we order done in our homes or stables. Just as it is right to have our stables cleaned every day so the horses will not suffer injury, so it would be exceedingly unfair and cruel to take greater care of our animals than of our souls.

(3) I am adding this in order that your dear heart may not accept this with disgust. I want to give you a clear example of the things we are talking about. Just as our homes or stables do not cause us horror or trouble if they are cleaned every day, so if our slighter offenses are atoned for daily they cannot cause despair or grief. However, if we are negligent in purging them, just as stables which are not cleaned for a long time putrefy and the dung causes a horrible stench, so that not only men but even the animals cannot stand it, this also happens to man. If he carelessly lets the filth of sin pile up in his soul by his evil deeds for a long time, and neglects to cleanse it by good works, not only will God not deign to visit him, but the sinner himself will not be able to stand it. Finally, careless souls, whose hearts are torn to pieces by many sins as if by wild beasts and

2 Apoc. 3.20.
3 John 14.23.

pierced as if by poisonous thorns, are accustomed to say to those who are like themselves: You know we are sad and anxious, so come, let us deceive ourselves by going to the circus or theater, or playing dice, or exercising ourselves in some sort of hunting. Such people seek comfort from the world outside because they do not deserve to receive that which is given by God from within the soul. Then, when they return to their consciences after much calumny or robbery or wretched spectacles or dangerous hunting, because they added rather than took away grief by that very exercise, they cannot live or rest in themselves at all, but are occupied with the struggles of sin. By pride they are torn to pieces as if by lions, by envy they are pierced as by the bite of vipers, through anger they burn with a cruel fire, and by cruelty they are seized with an attack of rage. Through robbery they are as if eaten by the teeth of wolves, in dissipation and drunkenness they wallow as in filthy sewers; so while they go from the cruel theatres to their more cruel consciences, from bad to worse, they cannot find rest in themselves. Weary from the torments of vice, how much better they could apply themselves to the divine lessons where they would find real freedom from care and complete comfort. Frequenting the threshold of the saints they could beg their help against vice, and by devoting themselves to fasting, prayer, and almsgiving strive to punish rather than to nourish or increase their sins. With the cruel army of vice routed from their hearts, they could hasten with all their strength to true rest, that is, to Christ, and hear Him say in most merciful words: 'Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and you will find rest for your souls.'[4]

(4) If anyone is willing to do this with humility and devotion, he will be able to go from a heavy storm to tranquility, from the most cruel barbaric land to the region of true peace. However, if there are some who are confident

4 Matt. 11.28,29.

that they are immune from the aforementioned evils, and because they do not confess serious sins glory in a dangerous self-assurance as if in innocence, let them fear an abundance of slight offenses. Like an intense itch or the annoyance of flies and fleas, it may torture and torment them so that they cannot even live with themselves. Just as we fear cruel, deadly beasts which usually kill with one attack, and dread the tiny insects which can annoy us, so with God's help let us redeem both our serious sins and the slight offenses without which we cannot live. We can do this by almsgiving and prayers, but most of all by the whole-hearted love of our enemies. If we reserve our repentance and atonement for our sins and offenses until the end of our life, we ought to fear that an unexpected death may overtake us and not permit us to reach that sudden moment of repentance which we deferred with fatal self-assurance. Therefore, let us fear what is written: 'Delay not to be converted to the Lord: and defer it not from day to day.'[5] O man, why do you put it off from day to day, and fail, instead, to fear that perhaps today you have your last day? If you willingly accept our advice as you usually do, dearly beloved, also think about it continually with an anxious and vigilant heart, so that you may be able to live with a good conscience in this life and happily arrive at eternal bliss in the life to come: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might for ever and ever.

**Sermon 62*

On Repentance

We often notice, dearly beloved, that some of you turn away from communion with the Church. I realize that this

5 Eccli. 5.8.

happens because of a consciousness of serious and great sins. Therefore I advise you, dearly beloved, that this is a wicked and doubly unwholesome idea, because men who do this both heap up a burden of sins and lose the reward of eternal salvation. This means both to add to one's guilt and to avoid the remedy. For this reason I beg you, beloved brethren, and I urge you, if anyone of you, conscious of his sins, considers himself unworthy of communion with the Church, that he make himself worthy. You say: How can anyone make himself worthy? How, unless he abandon his former erroneous ways and seek repentance? He who was defiled by the filth of his sins may be cleansed by the satisfaction of confession. Let him not wait to seek penance until the last moment of his life, when he may no longer be able to fulfill it. That sort of idea is foolish, dearly beloved. The sinner cannot ask for penance unless he will perform it. Merely the word of the penitent does not suffice to wipe out sins, because in satisfaction for great sins not only words but actions are sought. Of course, even at the very last moment penance is given because it cannot be denied. However, we cannot be a guarantee that one who has thus sought it deserves to be absolved. Indeed, how can one who is exhausted do penance, established as he is at the very end of his life? How can he do penance when he can no longer offer works of satisfaction for himself? Therefore, the penance which is asked by the weak is weak; the penance which is asked by a man only when he is sick is sickly; that which is sought by a man only when dying, it, too, I fear, will die. For this reason, dearly beloved, let anyone who wishes to find God's mercy do penance in this world while he is in good health, in order that he may be saved in the world to come. With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who together with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever.

*Sermon 63

On Repentance, in the Words of St. Augustine

(1) Fearing God myself, I appeal to your fear of Him in His sight, brethren. One who does not fear God, but despises me because I do, acts to his own harm. Therefore, listen to what I am going to say. I am certain that if a baptized person lives without any grave sin (I do not dare to say without sin, for who is without sin?), but if he does live without any grave sin, and has only sins which may daily be forgiven by the prayer: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors';[1] if he does what he wants God to do to him, then, when he comes to the end of his days, he does not finish his life but passes from this life to another. The change is from a life of labor to one of rest, from a miserable life to a happy one, from time to eternity. Whether such a man has recourse to baptism of his own volition or whether he is baptized when his life is in danger, he goes to the Lord in rest when he dies. However, a man who is baptized but who later deserts and violates the sacrament commits sin and repels God from himself. Still, if he does penance wholeheartedly, in a true spirit of repentance, then when God who saw the heart of David beholds him, even if he is rebuked by the Prophet and exclaims before God's terrible threats: 'I have sinned,' he will immediately hear: 'the Lord hath taken away thy sin.'[2] How powerful those three words are! They are but three, 'I have sinned,' yet in those three words the flame of the heart's sacrifice goes up to heaven. For this reason the man who really does penance to be released from the bonds with which he was fettered and separated

1 Matt. 6.12.
2 2 Kings. 12.13.

from Christ's body, if he lives well after repenting and dies after being reconciled to God, goes to the Lord. Such a man proceeds to rest, where he will not be deprived of the kingdom of God but will be separated from the Devil's followers. If a man consents to repent in the last stages of illness and then goes forth, that is, leaves the body after his reconciliation, I admit that we do not deny him what he seeks, but I do not dare to say that he died well. I do not presume or promise to say it, or deceive you or lie or assure you. The man who faithfully lives well surely dies well. If he is baptized in time, he dies with assurance. If a man does penance while he is in good health, if he is reconciled and later lives well, he is secure.

(2) You say: What does it mean to live well? Instruct us on this point, good priest, so that we may know. You who have performed penance and are living until now, you say you do not know whether God will pardon your deeds, whether He will forgive your sins on judgment day. You give us no assurance in this regard. What does it mean to live well after repentance? Teach us. I will tell you: Refrain from drunkenness, concupiscence, theft, bad talk, immoderate laughter, and idle words, for which men will have to render an account on judgment day. See how I mentioned slight offenses but omitted the serious and injurious ones. This, too, I say: A man should keep himself from these vices not only after repentance but before it, while he is still in good health, for no one knows whether he will be able to repent and confess his sins to God and the priest. That is why I said a good life is necessary before repentance, and a better one after it.

(3) If a man repents and is reconciled at the last moment, I am not sure whether he will die secure. I can give penance, but not assurance. Listen to what I say, for I must explain it more clearly lest anyone misunderstand. Will such a person be condemned? I do not say that, but he will not be set free.

What are you telling me, holy bishop? What am I telling you? I do not know. I have said I will not presume or promise, and I know nothing further of God's will. Do you want to be free from doubt, brother? Do you want to avoid uncertainty? Do penance while you are still healthy. If you really repent in good health, when your last day comes hasten to be reconciled. If you do this you are safe. Do you want me to say why you are safe? Because you did penance when you might have sinned. Behold, I have told you why you are safe. If you are willing to do penance when you can no longer sin, your sins have left you, but not you them. How do you know, you say, whether God will have mercy and forgive me my sins? You say with truth, brethren, how do I know? That is why I give you a penance, because I do not know. Moreover, he says: Then entrust my case to God. Why do you compel me with words and leave me to God my judge? I entrust you to the judgment of Him to whom I commend myself. If I thought that penance would not help you, I would not give it to you. Similarly, if I knew it would benefit you I would not advise or terrify you. There are two possibilities: either you will be forgiven or you will not. Which of these will be for you I do not know. However, I do give this advice: Let uncertainty go and keep certainty; honestly do penance as long as you live. Then when you come to God's judgment you will not be confounded by it but brought into His kingdom.

Sermon 64

An Admonition to Have Recourse to the Healing of Repentance Without Excuses in Case of Serious Sin

(1) Beloved brethren, whenever someone happens to fall into some serious sin or fault, as human weakness does, he

should neither despair because God is just nor be presumptuous because He is merciful. He should fear His justice in order to obtain mercy, and he should have confidence in His mercy in such a way that he dreads His justice. The longer God has to wait for our amendment, the more severely He punishes us if we think about turning to Him too late. A poultice or clamp is best applied to wounds when they are still fresh, for health is quickly restored if the wound is not allowed to fester from a long-standing burn. But someone says: I will have recourse to the healing of repentance when I reach old age. Why is human weakness presumptuous, when it does not hold even one day of life in its power? How many expected to enjoy a long life and death took them away so suddenly that they could not attain even momentary repentance! We are ashamed to do penance for but a short time, and do not fear the suffering of eternal punishments without any end. O unhappy man! You do not blush over the wound itself, but you are ashamed of the binding of the wound. Sin is your wound, repentance the binding of the wound. When you are unwilling to do penance you doubtless merely pretend to apply a remedy to your wounds, not knowing that an open wound is much more foul and inspires greater horror than failure to wash the feet of guests as we promised at baptism, if a remedy were applied and the injury covered.

(2) Remember, brethren, even if we have not been overtaken by serious sins, there are small offenses which (so much the worse!) we do not attend to or at least regard as of no consequence. If all these were added together, I cannot imagine what amount of good works would be enough to outweigh them. Let us consider the faults we have committed since we reached the age of reason: swearing, perjury, cursing, calumny, idle gossip, hatred, anger, envy, evil desires, gluttony, too much sleep, mean thoughts, concupiscence of the eyes, pleasure of the ears, afflicting the poor, visiting Christ in prison too late or reluctantly, neglect in receiving strangers,

visiting the sick more rarely than we should, negligence in using all our energy to restore the discordant to harmony, the desire to eat at times of fasting, preoccupation with idle gossip when we are standing in church and the divine lessons are read, frequent distractions while chanting the psalms or praying, the repeated use at banquets of language that is not good but evil. Suppose we were to gather into one sum the almost countless similar offenses which we have committed since the age of reason. Even though they would not add up as serious sins, how many and what kind of good works could redeem them if God's justice and severity were not appeased by the divine mercy supplementing our humble and contrite penance with the addition of generous alms in proportion to our means? Since these offenses which I mentioned weigh us down and no man can live without them, and, in fact, perhaps even serious ones overtake us, I do not know how we can conscientiously assume a dangerous attitude of security. With fatal dissimulation we neglect to seek the remedy of repentance, and while we are exhausted by countless waves on the sea of this world, we wait a long time to seek the haven of penance. We do not realize that despair arises from a multitude of sins, and as a result of despair the reins of sin are relaxed without any regard. Then are fulfilled the words: 'The wicked man when he is come into the depths of sins, contemneth.'[1]

(3) Again, someone says: When I reach old age or am hopelessly ill with some great infirmity, then I will do penance. We will not say, of course, that such repentance cannot be of advantage. It certainly can be if one performs it along with generous almsgiving and the forgiveness of all his enemies, asking pardon in turn of all he may have injured. If the man survives, he should think it over with all his heart and as long as he lives do penance humbly and devoutly with moans and groans and abundant almsgiving. However, you

1 Prov. 18.3.

who are a wise man, reflect whether under these circumstances it is right to serve your sins and vices throughout your life, and then rise up to seek life when you are already half-dead. Do you want to be treated thus by your servant, so that while young and strong he serves your enemies and is only willing to return to serve you when he reaches old age? Therefore, it is not just to do to your Lord what you are unwilling to take from your servant. We know many men, indeed, who when they were in good health often said they earnestly wanted to do penance, but because they were unwilling to do so immediately they died without this remedy. Truly, the sinner, too, may be struck with this punishment, that since during his lifetime he forgot God at his death he forgets himself. It is doubtful whether a man who is unwilling to seek a remedy for his soul when he could will deserve to obtain it later, even if he is willing.

(4) Therefore, dearly beloved, let us think wisely and profitably of judgment and the day of giving an account, while with groans and sighs we mourn over our serious sins and faults as long as we live. Moreover, by continual prayer and more generous alms let us atone for the small sins we have committed in the past or now ceaselessly commit. Since the daily wounds of sin do not cease, so let the remedies of our alms and prayers never fail, for, if we punish ourselves by our own severity, we forestall the sentence of our future Judge. God grants immediate forgiveness to the man who does not spare himself because of his sins. For this reason the person who cuts himself off from communion because of his guilt cannot be separated from the altar in heaven, according to the words: 'Say first to your iniquities that you are justified.'[2] If you acknowledge your sins God will forgive you. So, let no one despair, but, likewise, let no one entertain presumptuous hope. The man who believes that even if he does penance for his sins the divine mercy will not forgive him

2 Cf. Prov. 18.17.

wrongly despairs, while one who defers the remedy of repentance to a much later day is presumptuous. Just as it is said to those who despair: 'On what day soever the sinner is converted, all his iniquities will be forgotten,'[3] so it is said to the presumptuous: 'delay not to be converted to the Lord.'[4] Let all men carefully heed these words, dearly beloved —both men and women, religious and lay, young and old, boys and girls. Avoiding fatal self-assurance, let us daily strive to apply to our sins the remedy of repentance, fearing what is written: 'Remember that death is not slow.'[5] If we faithfully do this, when we come before the tribunal of the eternal Judge we happily will not receive the sentence of damnation, but with joy and exultation will be given eternal rewards.

Sermon 65

Another Admonition on the Same Subject

(1) Dearly beloved, I plead with any of you who may have been overcome by the Devil's cunning and who through human weakness may have become involved in capital crimes. If anyone, in the words of the Apostle, has destroyed God's temple within him by violating himself, let him not despair of God's mercy. Let him arise at once from his iniquity, lest he bury himself in the ruins of habitual sin. Truly, not the sinner but he who perseveres in sin is hateful and an abomination to the Lord. So that no one may lack confidence in the divine forgiveness, our Lord like a very kind father consoles us through the words of the Prophet: 'I desire not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted

3 Cf. Ezech. 18.21.
4 Eccli. 5.8.
5 Eccli. 14.2.

and live,' and again: 'The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness.'[1] Still, even though His mercy is so great toward all men, it is profitable for us not to delay in turning to the Lord, and not to heap up sin upon sin. Moreover, we can also recognize infirmities of souls in the very wounds and fractures of the body. If a foot or hand is broken, it ordinarily can be restored to its former usefulness after some trouble. However, if limbs are broken in the same place a second or third time or even more, your heart can understand with what pains these breaks would have to be healed. Even after long and repeated treatments the limbs can hardly be restored to their former condition. A similar situation must be recognized as existing in fractures or wounds of the soul. If a person sins once or even twice, then without any excuses has recourse to the healing of penance, he will recover his former good condition without any delay. But if he begins to add sin upon sin and prefers to acquire an infection by concealing or defending the wounds of his soul rather than cure them by confession and the performance of penance, it is to be feared that these words of the Apostle will be fulfilled in him: 'Dost thou not know that the goodness of God is meant to lead thee to repentance? But according to thy hardness and unrepentant heart, thou dost treasure up to thyself wrath on the day of wrath and of the revelation of the just judgment of God.'[2]

(2) Perhaps someone thinks that he has committed such grievous sins that he no longer can merit God's mercy. Let this be far from the thoughts of all sinners. Whoever you are, O man, you look at the multitude of your sins and you do not see the almighty power of the divine Physician. Although God would like to show mercy because He is good, and He can because He is omnipotent, man closes the door of divine

1 Ezech. 33.11,12.
2 Rom. 2.4,5.

mercy to his soul when he believes that God is either unwilling or unable to have pity on him. He does not believe that God is good or almighty. No one should despair of divine mercy after a hundred sins, nor even after a thousand. Rather, he should show his confidence by hastening to regain God's favor without any delay. Indeed, if a man develops a habit of sin, even if he wants to he can no longer free himself from the snares of the Devil. David, who through divine mercy merited to become both a king and a prophet, even after such a great favor was overtaken to such an extent that he committed both adultery and murder. However, he did not reserve himself to take refuge in the healing of repentance in his old age. Immediately covering himself with a hairshirt and sprinkling his head with ashes, he did penance with loud groaning and lamenting; thus was fulfilled what he himself had said in the psalms: 'Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears.' Similarly: 'I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.'[3] Because he did not delay with fatal indifference the performance of his penance, he summoned God's mercy upon himself. Not only did he fail to lose his kingdom, but he even merited to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. But perhaps there is someone who says: I am in military service, I am married, so how can I do penance? Just as if when we advised penance we were saying that each one should be anxious to tear out his hair and not get rid of his sins, and should rip off his clothing rather than his evil habits! If anyone attempts to deceive rather than to excuse himself by this kind of pretence, let him notice that neither the dignity of his position nor the fineness of his garments could prevent King David from doing penance.

(3) Achab was another wicked king, concerning whom the Scriptures tell us that there was no other like him who

3 Ps. 6.7; 101.10.

sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. After he was perverted by his wife Jezabel and became hateful to God he had Naboth of Jezreel stoned to death because he wanted to have his vineyard, but was reproved for this by holy Elias. Thereupon, Achab rent his garments, put on a hairshirt, and with bowed head did penance. For this reason the word of God immediately came to Elias, saying: 'Hast thou not seen Achab humbled before me? Because he hath humbled himself for my sake, I will not bring the evil in his days.'[4] Remember, brethren, that although he was wicked he did not wait a long time to do penance; he did not hesitate to offer to God the sacrifice of a humble and contrite heart. Moreover, if he had persevered afterwards in the humility in which he began, the mercy of God would never have left him. King Manasses, too, as we read in the Scriptures, was so wicked and impious that it is said he filled all Jerusalem with his iniquity. However, when he was led into captivity and put in chains, by doing penance with great humility he obtained the grace of God to the point of deserving afterwards to be counted among the friends of God. Likewise, the harlot who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair; as soon as she knew that the divine Physician had come she went of her own accord to the house, although she had not been invited. Then she who had been bold before for her destruction became still bolder for her salvation, wherefore she deserved to hear that her sins were forgiven. Nor did she defer the performance of penance until the end of her life. She wanted to leave her wicked ways while she still had the power to sin, so that her will and not her inability would keep her from committing adultery.

(4) We could find in sacred Scripture many more men who did penance after countless crimes and thereby called down the mercy of God. Moreover, these people not only

4 3 Kings 21.29.

returned to their former condition, but even became better. However, since it would take too long to mention them all, these four that we have named are quite sufficient to make us realize that our God who forgave David such a serious sin, who spared the wicked King Achab, who counted Manasses among His friends when he did penance for his countless sins, and who forgave the harlot everything after she washed His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair—the same God who forgave such dreadful sinners is ready to forgive us, too, if we but turn to Him. Not only is He willing to forgive us our sins, but even to give us eternal happiness. As we consider this, dearly beloved, let us with God's help work as hard as we can not to let any crimes and especially the capital sins steal into our lives. If someone has already been brought to this evil condition by the Devil's cunning, he ought to procure a remedy for his needs before those sins acquire strength through daily practice. With loud weeping and groaning let him hasten to be reconciled to God. He should not be ashamed to do penance, for he was not ashamed to perform deeds that demand repentance. Let him hasten to restore God's image in his soul by good works, so that he may deserve to be recognized among His sons by the Father, and may not be excluded from eternal bliss or thrown out of the wedding banquet, and with bound hands and feet cast into the exterior darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. If by the medicine of penance, humility, and compunction he is restored to his former health of soul and is adorned with the pearls of good works, he will merit to hear: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy master.'[5] Amen.

5 Matt. 25.23.

Sermon 66

AN ADMONITION CHOSEN FROM THE BOOKS OF THE SAINTS AND THE ANCIENT FATHERS, THAT ANYONE WHO KNOWS HE HAS COMMITTED SERIOUS SINS SHOULD WITHOUT ANY EXCUSES HAVE RECOURSE TO THE REMEDY OF REPENTANCE

(1) I have frequently exhorted you, beloved brethren, and I do so again and again, that if anyone knows he has been tossed by the storm of passion on the sea of wickedness away from the shore of self-control and has incurred the shipwreck of his purity, he should swiftly take hold of the confession of his sins as the plank of a shattered ship. By this means he can escape the deep abyss of wickedness and reach the harbor of repentance, where he can fasten his anchor of hope in a safer place and restore his lost salvation. Each one should bewail his condition as though he were dead, and utter loud lamentations over his lifeless soul. Just as a mother is accustomed to weep her heart out over an only son who has died, so we should pour forth the whole weight of our grief over our only soul which has been killed by the sword of sin, so that it perhaps may be revived by a warm faith and the healing potion of tears. Above all, as I have repeatedly said, the sinner should watch carefully and see to it that he does not give alms to satisfy for his sins but does not give up the sins themselves. Let him fear the words of the Apostle: 'If I distribute all my goods to feed the poor, yet do not have charity, it profits me nothing.'[1]

(2) But someone says: How can a man be judged not to possess charity when he gives so much to the poor? I reply: How can he preserve charity in his soul when he is cruel to it and kills himself? The Holy Spirit does not lie when He

1 1 Cor. 13.3.

says: 'The soul that sinneth, the same shall die.'[2] If we kill our souls every time that we commit adultery or murder, how can it profit us to be kind to others when we are evidently wicked to ourselves? By giving alms we feed another's body, but by committing sin we strangle our soul. Therefore, as I have frequently advised, let us give alms to satisfy for our grave sins, but in such a spirit that we will never return to those sins. We must not trust our health or our years; one who is uncertain of his life is always slow in seeking remedies for his salvation. If the opportunity to repent is postponed in this way when it is within our power, how much it will be desired when it is lost!

(3) Since it is only in an uncertain, short lifetime that we are permitted to take care of our stains, wash away our faults, remedy the past, take thought of the future, and undo the wrong that has been done, let us strive with all our might that our life be reckoned as a gain for eternal life, that it do not avail unto death but unto salvation. Thus the groans which discover the sins in our hearts and punish the faults in our lives will be efficacious. May our weeping and the grief of our healing repentance leave nothing untouched or uncured which might rise up against us at the day of judgment or after some time reappear to accuse our guilty conscience. Let us hasten to offer the Lord a corrected life, before it is taken away. By dying to sin let us remove death and by the merits of our lives obtain true life, not storing up the remedies of repentance for the days of old age. The One who said: 'If the wicked at any time is converted and groans, all his iniquities shall not be remembered,'[3] also said: 'delay not to be converted to the Lord.'[4] If the first promise made you feel secure, the other plea should give you reason to worry. Listen to the

2 Ezech. 18.20.
3 Ezech. 18.21,22.
4 Eccli. 5.8.

Scriptures saying: 'Remember, son, that death is not slow,'[5] and 'say not: The mercy of the Lord is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins. Mercy and wrath are with him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners,'[6] that is, those who persevere in their sins. If we heed this faithfully and carefully, and have recourse to the healing of repentance without delay, we will be able to escape everlasting punishment and happily to obtain eternal rewards.

Sermon 67

Advice Concerning Those Who Do Public Penance

(1) Whenever we see some of our brothers or sisters performing public penance, by God's inspiration, dearly beloved, we can and should stir up great compunction in our hearts. Who would not rejoice and be glad, giving thanks to God to the best of his ability, when he sees a sinner angry over his sins and proclaiming this in a loud voice? Indeed, what he formerly defended with the greatest insolence he now begins to blame in a salutary manner. He has now begun to be united with God, because he no longer wants to defend his sins, but to punish them. Moreover, since God detests sin, as soon as a man begins to hate it also by despising and turning aside from his faults he is united to God. As a matter of fact, one who does public penance could have performed it privately. However, after considering the multitude of his sins, he feels that he is not strong enough to oppose his great vices alone, and so he wants to solicit the assistance of all the people. In like manner, when a vineyard has become barren through neglect, a man invites his neighbors and friends, and on a certain day the whole crowd assembles to

5 Eccli. 14.12.
6 Eccli. 5.6,7.

repair the damage, because with the help of many hands what cannot be repaired by one is accomplished. For this reason a man who wants to perform public penance, assembles a congregation, as it were, so that, aided by the prayers of all the people, he may be able to tear out the thorns and briers of his sins. Thus, with God's help, a harvest of virtue may be able to spring up, so that the vineyard of his heart which had been accustomed to grow thorns, not grapes, may begin to produce the sweetness of spiritual wine. Nor should we regard with indifference the fact that the penitent is covered with a hairshirt. Because the hairshirt is made of goat's hair and goats represent sin, the penitent publicly confesses that he is not a lamb but a goat. By these signs he proclaims aloud: Look at me, everyone, and shed pious tears for me in my misery. Know that I am interiorly what I am on the outside, for I do not want to appear outwardly just and conceal within my soul injustice and robbery. Like the publican, I lie on the ground and do not dare to lift my eyes to heaven, but humbly lift up the wounds and swellings of my sins to the divine Physician for healing. Therefore, I beg you all to implore His mercy upon me, so that He may deign to bring back to life the rottenness of my sins, and restore me to true health. I am afraid that what the Lord said about hypocrites might be fulfilled in me: 'They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves,'[1] and so, as I said, I am showing myself outwardly as I know I am inside. Because, hitherto, I was adorned outwardly with precious garments while my soul was covered with the leprosy of sin, now, wearing a hairshirt and earnestly desiring repentance, I ask that through your prayers I may merit to be freed from the paralysis of my sins. Therefore, I beg you again and again, since by God's inspiration you know how to weep with those who weep, may your pious souls be aroused to weeping and groaning to obtain the remission of my sins.

1 Matt. 7.15.

I am certain that your holy prayers can obtain this for me from our most merciful Judge.

(2) I speak the truth, brethren, when I say that a man must be thought wicked and inhuman if he does not sympathize with one who seeks repentance in this manner, and does not hasten to pray earnestly in his behalf. Moreover, the Lord has said: 'All things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.'[2] Therefore, what we wish to receive from others if we are disposed to do public penance we should hasten to do for others with our whole heart and soul. What did we want when we deserved to seek the remedy of repentance, except that everyone should endeavor to implore divine mercy for us? For this reason, we should with perfect charity confer upon others what we desire to receive from them, according to the words: 'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be saved,'[3] and: 'a brother helping his brother shall be exalted.'[4] If, then, we are willing to act devoutly with perfect charity, we can and should believe most firmly that the ineffable goodness of the Lord will deign to hear us. Since He Himself has said: 'If two or three shall agree on earth about anything at all for which they ask, it shall be done for them,'[5] can the good and merciful Lord who promised to hear two or three fail to hear all the people praying for the forgiveness of a penitent? Far be it from us to believe but slightly in His ineffable mercy. We should, instead, believe with our whole heart that He hears us when we pray kindly and devoutly in behalf of our repentant brethren, for He invited petition when He said in the Gospel: 'Ask, and you shall receive.'[6] Notice, brethren, that one who seeks repentance pleads for excom-

2 Matt. 7.12.
3 James 5.16.
4 Prov. 18.19.
5 Matt. 18.19.
6 John 16.24.

munication, for, when he receives his penance, he is covered with a hairshirt and thrown outside. Now he asks for excommunication, because he considers himself unworthy to receive his Eucharistic Lord. Furthermore, he wants to be excluded from the altar for some time in order that he may merit to arrive with a clear conscience at the altar in heaven. Lastly, with great reverence he asks to be separated from Christ's Body and Blood like a guilty, evil individual, so that by this humiliation he may approach communion at the heavenly altar.

(3) Although one who devoutly does penance with compunction of heart and contrition, dearly beloved, should have confidence in the intercession of all the people, nevertheless, using all his strength and with God's help, he should be solicitous for his own salvation. He should not say in his heart: See, everyone has prayed for my sins, so now I can and should be free from worry. Far be such thoughts, much less such words, from one who does penance. Let his confidence in the prayers of others be such, as far as he can with God's help, that he exercises himself in good works—in fasting, or almsgiving, or prayer, or humility, or charity, or visiting the sick, or reconciling the discordant, or receiving foreigners, or humbly washing the feet of holy strangers, or refraining from slander and other evil speech. Unless infirmity demands it, he should not drink wine. If this is impossible because of old age or some stomach disorder, let him heed the words of the Apostle: 'Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake.'[7] There are some penitents who want to be reconciled immediately, so that they may eat meat. It is certain that a man does not accept his penance with true compunction, if he desires or dares to eat meat without the compulsion of infirmity. Therefore, even when a penitent has been reconciled he should not take meat if he can have vegetables or beans or fish, at his own or his neighbor's table. I mention this

7 1 Tim. 5.23.

because some penitents (so much the worse!) eat meat very eagerly, and often drink wine to excess. Our poor bodies should be fed prudently lest sin be committed again by drunkenness and gluttony, and then the fact that we seemed to repent will profit us little or not at all. Therefore, with God's help, let us use all our strength not to be carelessly injured when God's mercy has restored us to health after the wounds of our sins. May He deign to grant this, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 68

A Reproof of Penitents

(1) If any of you do penance with compunction and devotion, brethren, I ask you not to take offense, because our sermon today is addressed to penitents who are careless. You who are called penitents in name but not in intention, in title but not in deeds, should listen. I fear that you are ashamed even to be called by the name of penitents, for you think this does you an injury rather than bring a cure. Tell me, I beseech you, how do you claim to do penance when you daily do things which demand repentance? How do you suppose you will obtain pardon when you go to church more rarely than a worldly person? You do not sweep the church with your hands; you do not open your home to strangers or bring the poor who are without a home under your roof; you do not seek those who are in prison or visit the sick, nor do you condescend to wash the feet of pious strangers; you do not restrain your mind from concupiscence or your flesh from lust or your greediness from pleasure. Why, you do not know what fasting is; you are not satisfied with just enough food, but must be stuffed with more sumptuous fare and

corrupted by drunkenness. When this is finished, you have time for worldly or shameful gossip and scandal; and rightly so, for, just as charity is delighted with fasting, so hatred takes pleasure in luxury. In the midst of all this, you have no thought of amendment, nor sorrow in confessing your sins. You go along happy, carefree, and proud, thinking that you are living while the soul in your body is—I will not say dead—but buried. 'The soul which gives itself up to pleasures,' says the Apostle, 'is dead while it is still alive.'[1]

(2) See what you have come to, most wretched and pitiable soul. You have made a tomb of yourself, as the Lord says in the Gospel: 'Whited sepulchres outwardly, but within full of dead men's bones.'[2] Or in the words of the Psalmist: 'Their throat is an open sepulchre.'[3] Truly, those jaws are like those of a dead man, for they never or only with difficulty deign to speak God's praises. Therefore, we advise you in the words of a shepherd but groaning with paternal affection, because almost every day we observe with sadness many people carried off in death without correcting their lives. Moreover, we know that there is no opportunity to make satisfaction in hell, for the Prophet says: 'And who shall confess to thee in hell?'[4] And in the words of the Apostle: 'All of us must be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has won through the body, according to his works, whether good or evil.'[5] 'While we have time, let us do good to all men.'[6] Let us redeem our sins by our fasting, prayers, and tears. Following the advice of our Lord Himself, let us grieve over ourselves as though dead, for He deigned to teach us repentance and to promise forgiveness when He said: 'Blessed are

1 Tim. 5.6.
2 Matt. 23.27.
3 Ps. 5.11.
4 Ps. 6.6.
5 2 Cor. 5.10.
6 Gal. 6.10.

they who now mourn, for they shall be comforted.'[7] Let us not do to another what we do not want to suffer, but let us confer on others what we desire to receive from them. The Lord Himself tells us: 'Do not to another what you do not want done to you,'[8] and 'all things whatever you would that men should do to you, even so do you also to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.'[9] Then we will fulfill the teaching of the psalms: 'Turn away from evil and do good: seek after peace and pursue it.'[10] Observing this, it is at all times becoming for us to cleanse and sanctify the stains on our souls by good works, and every day to settle our offenses. Especially in these times we should keep lust away from marriage, gluttony from our feasts, and vice from our minds. Then, just as the body abstains from eating, so may the soul fast from sin. Through God's goodness, then, may we with chaste body and pious heart be able to celebrate the day we long for without any reproaches of conscience, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sermon 69

That the Times of the Christians Were Foretold. It Came to Pass that Kings of the Earth Were Converted to Christ. On the Brazen Serpent; and on the Ten Virgins

(1) In all the sacred Scriptures, dearly beloved, the times of the Christians were foretold. This, too, came to pass, that kings of the earth who persecuted the Christians because of idols destroyed the idols later for the sake of Christ. Then all power was subject to the yoke of Christ, so that what was

7 Matt. 5.5.
8 This is not a quotation from Scripture.
9 Matt. 7.12.
10 Ps. 33.15.

written might be fulfilled: 'I have destroyed them.'[1] What does this mean, 'I have destroyed them'? I have avenged myself on them. Christ's Body says: I have avenged myself on my enemies. How has He avenged Himself? By killing error in them and reviving their faith. Whatever it was in all wicked and perverse men who persecuted Christians was destroyed. When a man persecutes you, do not pay any attention to the form which God made or the soul which God breathed into him. What God created does not persecute you, but the malice which man made. Everything that God created praises Him. You have heard in the 'Canticle of Blessings' read on every feast that all things praise God, everything in heaven and on earth: angels, men, stars, trees of the earth, rivers, and seas. Whatever God created in heaven, on earth, or in the sea praises Him. Have you ever heard, then, that avarice praises God? Have you ever heard that drunkenness praises God? Have you ever heard that dissipation praises God? Have you ever heard that heresies praise God? Why do all these things not praise God? Because they were not created by Him. A tree preserves what was created, but man destroys what was lifted up in him. If man safeguarded in himself the good which God created, that is, His image, he would always praise God by his life as well as with his tongue. Thus, our times were predicted, but it was foretold that there would be schisms in our day. Therefore, just as that Church fought against the Devil, so also this Church fights.

(2) Does the struggle against the Devil ever cease? The Devil is called a lion and a dragon: a lion because of his violence, a dragon for his treachery. A lion rages openly, but a dragon secretly lies in wait. In the early days the Church fought against the lion; now, her battle is with the dragon. But as the lion was conquered, so the dragon is conquered. What is the strength of a lion against that lion of which it is

1 Ps. 117.10.

written: 'The lion of the tribe of Juda has overcome'?[2] Moreover, what is the strength of a dragon against the death of the Lord who hung a serpent on a cross? He triumphed over death which the Devil had craftily inflicted upon man. When Moses in the desert fastened a serpent up on the cross, everyone who had been bitten by a serpent and looked upon this one was cured. Similarly, everyone who has been bitten by the craft of Satan should look upon Christ hanging on the cross, for there death was slain. The Lord always lives, but He was clothed with death in order to kill it. Death could not die, except in life. Just as bitterness does not disappear except in sweetness, nor cold except in warmth, so death is not dead except in life. What is life? Our Christ. So life was clothed with death. He was crucified, He was slain, He died, and arose again in the fullness of life. Death is destroyed and completely swallowed up, now that life has arisen, so that the Apostle could say of Him: 'We know that Christ dies now no more, and death shall no longer have dominion over him.'[3] When death first had dominion over Him, it was only with His consent. The lion's companion opposes Him with arrogance; then the one by whom He was judged lifted up his neck and said: 'Dost thou not answer me?' The roaring of the lion was furious, the neck of the serpent is swollen with pride; but listen to the reply of the lamb who knows how to slay the lion. Hear that death had dominion over Him with His consent, for Christ answered in turn: 'Thou wouldst have no power at all over me were it not given thee from heaven.'[4] Who gave him this power from above? God. Who is God? The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order that man may have power against God, he has received power from God Himself to judge God; the hidden God, the manifest man.

2 Apoc. 5.5.
3 Rom. 6.9.
4 John 19.10,11.

(3) In order that with God's help we may conquer the lion and dragon we mentioned above, let us with great fear and trembling keep before our eyes what the Apostle Peter says: 'Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking something to devour.'[5] The Apostle also admonishes us concerning the dragon, that we should beware of him with all anxiety: 'For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest, as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.'[6] Therefore, when you experience some public tribulation, understand it as the madness and raging of the lion; when evil desires arouse you to avarice or dissipation with their clever seductions, recognize the flattery of the dragon. So, if you want to preserve a right faith with fidelity, be strong against the lion's raging in adversity; if you desire to keep your soul's virginity untainted, guard against the flattery of the dragon as much as you can. Otherwise, if you are careless, you may allow the five senses which you possess to be corrupted by the serpent the way the five virgins were. Whenever there is something beautiful to see, sweet to taste, flattering to hear, pleasant to smell, or soft to touch, if we are careless about it we allow the purity of our soul to be corrupted by the evil desires which overtake it. Then is fulfilled in us what the Prophet says: 'Death is entered through your windows.'[7] Indeed, through our five senses, as through doors, either death or life enters our soul.

(4) With the Lord's help let us be like those five wise virgins who, as we read in the Gospel, 'carried oil in their lamps.'[8] Let us see to it as far as we can that we are not found among those foolish virgins who congratulated them-

5 1 Peter 5.8.
6 Cf. 2 Cor. 11.2,3.
7 Jer. 9.21.
8 Matt. 25.4.

selves on their bodily integrity alone, but lost the purity of their souls through the corruption of their five senses. They did not carry oil with them, so they are told: 'Go, and buy for yourselves from those who sell.'[9] Oil in this instance is flattery and human praise; all flatterers sell oil. Those virgins are called foolish because they sought praise from without and did not possess it within their own conscience. They did not carry oil with them because they wanted to have praise on the tongue of another and not in their own conscience. What was the reply given to those foolish virgins? 'Lest there may not be enough for us';[10] as the Apostle says: 'I do not even judge my own self.'[11] Our conscience trembles under the examination of God's judgment, and fears that, although it seems upright to itself, the rule of justice may go beyond its treasure and what seemed straight now appear crooked. How much less, then, dearly beloved, should we care about the judgments of other men about us, whether good or bad? We ought not rejoice too much when we can be praised for our efforts, nor be excessively sad when we are blamed; false praise cannot crown us, nor false blame condemn us. As long as we live here we cannot judge ourselves rightly, I do not say as to what we will be tomorrow, but even what we are today. How much less, then, should we be moved by the judgments of others than by our own conscience which bears testimony to our lives? Indeed, our glory should be in our conscience.

(5) Therefore, brethren, let your charity take notice that I am saying what I want, that which is especially necessary in the daily trials of the Catholic Church. Although it is not as I wish, it is as the Lord gave me the power to speak and willed that I should. The Church lives in the midst of trials, grows among them, perseveres through them, and succeeds

9 Cf. Matt. 25.9.
10 *Ibid.*
11 1 Cor. 4.3.

in them. Moreover, when she succeeds, rest follows labor; temptation withdraws and blessing remains. I exhort you, brethren, to listen to this with profit. Hold on to it, chew it over in your mind and feed upon it; let not what is just now entrusted to your memory depart from your mouth. The memory of man is like the stomach of cattle. You know that, according to the Law, animals which do not chew their cud are considered unclean; those which do so are clean and have a split hoof which is necessary for distinguishing truth and falsehood. The split hoof is useful for the discovery of what is right and what is wrong. Ruminating applies to those who later think over what they have heard or remembered. Indeed, we eat and transmit the thought into our memory, as though into the stomach. What do cattle do when they chew their cud? What was thrown into the manger and is stored up in its stomach is brought back to the mouth and the cattle rests in its sweet taste. I have mentioned this in order to urge you not to be like the unclean animals. The latter take something into the stomach but do not chew it afterwards, so the whole sweet flavor passes away. What is stored away does not benefit you unless its savor returns to your mouth. Hear this thought clearly and expressly stated in another sentence. What has been said obscurely in a symbolic manner concerning ruminating animals is explained clearly elsewhere so that we may understand its meaning: 'A treasure to be desired resteth in the mouth of the wise man, but the fool swalloweth it.'[12]

12 Cf. Prov. 21.20.

*Sermon 70

If Some Tribulation Befalls Us, We Ought to Impute It to Our Sins and Not to God

(1) As often as adversities come, dearly beloved, or when by God's just judgment hostility or dryness or death is imposed, we should attribute this to our sins rather than to God's injustice. In the words of the Apostle: 'God who inflicts punishment is not unjust.'[1] The world is indeed harassed by the evil lives and statements of many men. This attack upon the good and the bad is just like when mud and an ointment are blown on the same wind; the one exhales a foul odor, while the other has a sweet fragrance. In order that everyone may understand this, I will reveal it more explicitly to your charity. Good and bad people are two urns, one of which contains rottenness, the other precious spices. When they are blown by the same fan, the urn which has spices gives forth a desirable fragrance, while the one which is a sewer returns an unbearable stench. Similarly, both good and bad people are troubled, but are distinguished by the penetrating judgment of God. Whenever tribulation comes to the world, the good like a holy vessel thank God who has deigned to chastise them; those who are proud, dissolute, or avaricious on the contrary blaspheme and murmur against God, saying: O God, what great evil have we done that we should suffer such calamities? Therefore, even if the good die in the midst of adversities, they will end a life full of labors and miseries, but will receive eternal life from which 'sorrow and mourning shall flee away.'[2] Unfaithful souls refuse to believe this, and while fettered with love for this life, they cannot keep it but lose it by their infidelity. What

1 Cf. Rom. 3.5.
2 Isa. 35.10.

are you doing? What are you concerned about? The world is being driven on, is it not? Yes, and you, also, lovers of the world, are being driven on to go out, and to come to what you do not want to see but must. As often as you by bad actions or perchance by impious practices consult seers and magicians, questioning sorcerers and soothsayers, you think you are avoiding the evils of this world. You cannot escape them, and, what is worse, they make you commit your sins. I do not say this insultingly, but with groans and grief. Behold, I will place before your eyes the evils which occur. If anyone in a proud, rebellious spirit refuses to amend his life, there will be fulfilled in him what we read: 'He who is filthy, let him be filthy still; but he who is just will do what is more just; and he who is holy will do what is more holy.'[3] The hope of good men is not placed in this world, for 'Hope that is seen,' says the Apostle, 'is not hope.'[4] Since hope which is seen is mundane, it is turned into bitterness. Truly, the world has given its lovers a bitter potion to drink. O misfortune of the human race! The world is bitter and it is loved; how do you suppose it would be loved if it were sweet?

(2) Truth addresses you lovers of the world. Where is that which you loved? Where is that which you considered great? Where is that which you were unwilling to renounce? Where are all those estates? Where, those brilliant cities? Is it not true that the more harshly cities were chastised, the more unwilling they were to accept the discipline of reproof, even though other provinces had been corrected? These facts are stated with grief rather than insult, for a soul cannot be insensible to such calamities if the affection of sympathy moves him. If only they were heeded, the truths would be regarded with great affection. But since dire calamity struck our eyes at the time of the siege and now afflicts them in time of death, and scarcely anyone survives to care for the

3 Cf. Apoc. 22.11.
4 Rom. 8.24.

bodies of men who have died and need burial, consider also those evils which we have borne through the just judgment of God, when entire provinces were led into captivity, mothers of families abducted, pregnant women carried off, little children torn from arms and thrown into the road, half-dead, while their nurses are not permitted to keep living children or to bury the dead. On all sides there is great agony and grief. One bewails her little child thrown to the birds and dogs; another fears to offend her barbarian master. Fear and horror equally continue to torture hearts. Burdens are placed on their shoulders; their spirit is worn out from great torments, their body exhausted by heavy loads. Wicked savage power especially demanded of such women that one who knew she was mistress of many slaves suddenly grieved that she was a servant of the barbarians and without wealth. Thus was fulfilled in us what we hear from David the Prophet: 'Thou hast sold thy people for no price: and there was no reckoning in the exchange of them.'[5] The barbarians demanded hard services of delicate, noble women without any compassionate pity. While we see and behold such calamities, the noise of their shouting rises to our ears from those who lost their husbands or parents in that siege. Is the flesh of men unfeeling, even if stony feelings are found in some men? Who would not grieve upon hearing and seeing this, and in the person of those who were struck bewail himself rather than them? Therefore we can say with the Prophet: 'Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep day and night for the wounded of the daughter of my people?'[6] The eyes of men fail when they regard the dead, not only of bodies, but also of souls. As Christians, we are speaking to Christians; the better part of man grieves over the better part which was carried away. We know that in the devastation many were snatched out of this life without

5 Ps. 43.13.
6 Jer. 9.1.

the sacrament of baptism, and in the midst of those vessels of wrath their souls were left unrepentant. What more appropriate grief, what more noble lamentation, can be found when the anger of almighty God is aroused so much that He repels even 'His tabernacle where he dwelt among men'?[7] Moreover, He who 'has not spared even his own Son but has delivered him for us all'[8] did not notice the price of such blood. He saw everything violated in our hearts, His temple in His condescension, with the result that neither truth nor justice nor charity could abide there. Therefore, He did not hesitate to hand over to the enemy the very vessels in which the sacraments of the faithful were celebrated, and spared no church or priest or consecrated virgin or city.

(3) However, dearly beloved, we whom the Lord does not spare because of our merits but still reserves for repentance should not consider without great fear that we are all shown an example every time punishments are inflicted upon men. Therefore, the death of others should profit toward our salvation, their tribulations should be a correction for us, and out of their blows we should apply remedies for our wounds. Truly, divine Goodness has not spared us because of our merits, as I already said, but He has mercifully saved us for repentance. Therefore, let us fear what the Lord said in the Gospel: 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they have suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent, you will all perish in the same manner.'[9] Indeed, if we are willing to punish ourselves by doing penance, God will immediately deign to have mercy on us. Thus, one who used to be dissolute should be chaste; the proud, humble; the envious, kind; the man who was accustomed to seize the goods of another by deceit or artifice should begin to give

7 Ps. 77.60.
8 Rom. 8.32.
9 Luke 13.2,3.

more generous alms of his own money. What the Lord asks of us, dearly beloved, is exceedingly delightful. He does not tell us: Fast more than you can, and keep vigils longer than your strength allows. He does not advise: Abstain from wine or meat. None of these does He require, but He deigns to enjoin what all men with His grace can do without great effort. I ask you, brethren, what is the difficulty of striving for humility, observing charity, loving justice, preserving chastity, wishing all men what each one desires for himself? Truly, as He said: 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.'[10] Now, what is worse, many men want to carry the exceedingly hard and bitter yoke of avarice with much difficulty, and refuse to impose the sweet yoke and light burden of Christ upon their shoulders. They prefer to sink under a heavy load with many sins rather than to take up the yoke of Christ which can lift them up to heaven. As we wisely and devoutly reflect upon these matters, dearly beloved, let us put off the hard and harsh yoke of avarice from our necks, and put upon our shoulders the exceedingly sweet yoke of Christ, so that we may lift up our citizenship to heaven, according to the Apostle, and appear with Christ in glory. May He deign to grant this, who, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 71

A Sunday Sermon to the People, Containing Something about Ananias

(1) I think that no one among you is so foolish, dearly beloved, that he cannot see that the great evils of our day, the great miseries with which we are constantly worn out and

10 Matt. 11.30.

afflicted, are the just deserts of our sins. That is the reason for almost everything that happens or afflicts us in this world. However, let us in accord with the advice of the Prophet turn aside from evil and do good; let us seek after peace and pursue it. The more we realize that that day is approaching which is described by the blessed Apostle when he says: 'In the last days iniquity will abound, and the charity of the many will grow cold,'[1] the more carefully and faithfully let us beg God to bring us back from habitual sin. As soon as avarice, cunning, and injustice abound, falling away from the goodness of liberality, fraternal charity, which formerly was preserved in the love of Christ, grows cold. In the days of the Apostles fraternal charity spread rapidly, but now so much ambition and injustice are increasing on all sides that you will scarcely find even a few souls who abound in good works. The Apostle advised all rich men to be of this kind when he said: 'Be rich in good works.'[2] He wanted it understood that a rich man in the Church is one who is rich in God, one who out of love for Him and fear of His judgments is enriched because he piously gave his wealth to the poor and needy, confident that what he has given away is not lost. Distresses and scourges are the resources of men, which, produced and kept there beyond need, on the death of the master are left to those who, even though they are considered rich in this age because of the variety of their clothes and possessions, are poor in justice and piety in the eyes of the Church. When too little is done for the poor in view of what each one is able, neither this which is given brings satisfaction nor, certainly, that which is kept back.

(2) Thus, when Ananias, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, sold his inheritance and thought he could rightly offer part of the money and deny a part for distribution by the Apostles, he lost both the money he presented and that

1 Matt. 24.12.
2 1 Tim. 6.18.

which he withheld. Indeed, he equally lost both his money and his salvation. Since he took away part of what he had promised he was condemned as a wicked fraud. Let man, who makes promises to God in the sacrament of baptism, take notice. I beg you to remember, dearly beloved, what your sponsor who received you at the holy font promised that you would become. See the abundance; nay, more, on all sides there are foreigners and captives, strangers seeking alms and shelter. Do what you have promised, so that what was said to Ananias may not be said to you: 'Thou hast not lied to men, but to God.'[3] Avarice is a great evil, dearly beloved; in fact, it is the source of all evils, as the Apostle says: 'Covetousness is the root of all evils, and some in their eagerness to get rich have strayed from the faith.'[4] You know that someone who is too stingy is dishonest when he refuses to give more than he ought of his own wealth or money to the poor, or when he envies the possessions of another. If any of you are like this, consider what you can do in God's sight if you have broken your word. In former days, those who joined the faith sold their homes and property and stored them up in heaven, where they cannot perish through any enmity, by offering the Apostles all the money to be distributed for the benefit of the poor. Now we do not even give tithes of our little inheritance. Moreover, if the Lord bids us sell in order that we may have something to give to the poor, we buy instead, and increase what we perhaps acquired unjustly from the labors of another. So dull has become the vigor of our faith, so weak its virtue! For this reason the Lord said, when He foresaw our day: 'When the Son of Man comes, will he find, do you think, faith on the earth?'[5]

(3) We see His prediction verified to such an extent,

3 Acts 5.4.
4 1 Tim. 6.10.
5 Luke 18.8.

dearly beloved, that there is no more fidelity in the fear of God, in laws of justice, in charity, or in good works. Blessed Paul foretold this when he said: 'In the last days dangerous times will come. Men will be lovers of self, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, criminal, heartless, faithless, slanderers, incontinent, merciless, unkind, treacherous, stubborn, puffed up with pride, loving pleasure more than God.'[6] Therefore, let us consider, dearly beloved, whether almost the whole world is not filled with these vices. Why? We reply: Because no one has any fear of the future or trembles within himself over the day of the Lord and God's wrath, the punishment prepared for unbelievers, and the eternal torments to come for the unfaithful. If our conscience feared these heavenly commands or thought they referred to us, we surely would be on guard; and if we were on guard, we would escape those things. So, let us rouse ourselves from our sleep as much as we can with the Lord's help, and after shaking off the slothfulness of our wicked life let us be alert to hear and to observe the Lord's precepts. Let us be what He commanded us to be when He said: 'Let your lions be girt about and your lamps burning, and you yourselves like men waiting for their master's return from the wedding; so that when he comes and knocks, they may open to him. Blessed are those servants whom the master, on his return, shall find watching.'[7] If, then, we keep the commands which I mentioned and love the Lord's precepts, we cannot be overcome by the deceitful Devil while we are asleep. Instead, we shall reign like faithful, vigilant servants under the guidance of Christ who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

6 2 Tim. 3.1-4.
7 Luke 12.35-37.

Sermon 72

Ephrem's Admonition on Prayer and Idle Gossip

(1) Although in many respects, dearly beloved, through God's goodness your life makes us happy and we frequently rejoice at your progress, there is some advice which your hearts should hear. For this reason I beg you to accept our advice gladly, as is your custom. Again I rejoice, dearly beloved, and thank God because I see you devoutly hurry to church to hear the divine lessons. However, if you want to improve your progress and complete our joy, you ought to assemble sooner. If his infirmities do not hold a man down in prolonged nights, not without guilt of soul does he come late for service. I ask you, brethren, if pedlars or goldsmiths or carpenters or other artisans awake early to procure bodily necessities, should we not get up before dawn to go to church so that we may merit to receive forgiveness of our sins? If merchants usually look out for material gain, why should we not be alert out of love for eternal life? People sometimes expose themselves to winds and storms and sail from east to west and back again, encountering many dangers, at times even suffering the bitterest hunger and thirst. If men patiently suffer these ills for the sake of perishable wealth, why should we be ashamed to watch out for eternal life? Therefore I beseech you to come earlier, and when you do come strive to occupy yourselves with prayer or chanting of the psalms rather than idle or worldly gossip. If a person who comes to church wants to engage in useless conversation, it would be better for him not to have come, for while he is busy with useless talking he himself does not pray nor does he allow others to pray or listen to the divine lessons. Even if a man of this sort comes to church with but slight sins, he returns home with a greater one. In the very place where he

might have secured a remedy for himself and others by chanting and prayer he has taken pains to injure himself by idle conversation.

(2) As often as we apply ourselves to prayer, dearly beloved, we should above all pray in silence and quiet. If a man wants to pray aloud he seems to take the fruit of prayer away from those who are standing near him. Only moans and sighs and groans should be heard. Indeed, our prayer ought to be like that of holy Anna, the mother of blessed Samuel, of whom it is written that 'She prayed, shedding many tears, and only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard at all.'[1] Let everyone hear and imitate this, especially those who pray aloud without any embarrassment and in such a chattering fashion that they do not allow those near them to pray. Therefore, let us pray, as I said, with sighs and moans and groans, in accord with the words of the Prophet: 'I roared with the groaning of my heart.'[2] Let us pray, I repeat, not with a loud voice, but with our hearts crying out to God.

(3) When we pray, dearly beloved, let us with the Lord's help strive as much as we can not to allow any extraneous thoughts to creep into our minds, lest we have one thing in our hearts and utter another with our lips. Let not our tongues pray to God while our thoughts are busy with different interests and far from the sense of the prayer, for then we should commit a fault in the very place where we might receive a remedy. Indeed, if you wanted to discuss some necessary business with a powerful individual and then suddenly turned aside and broke off in the middle of the conversation to busy yourself with buffoonery, what kind of an insult do you suppose you would be inflicting? In fact, how much anger do you suppose you would arouse in that man? Although when we speak to men we apply ourselves with all the attention of our minds so as not to seem to insult them by thinking of

1 1 Kings 1.10,13.
2 Ps. 37.9.

something else, we do not follow this practice when we speak to God in prayer. While we discuss the misery of our sins in the presence of His majesty, we are completely unashamed to allow our senses slavishly to wander here and there and to draw our unhappy minds away from the sight of the divine majesty by many occupations. Therefore, before prostrating yourselves in prayer, each one of you should with God's help remove all useless thoughts from the mind's attention. If our soul is on fire with love for the Holy Spirit it will consume every vice with the fire of compunction and prayer and dispel all its wandering, fleeting fancies, so that only virtues and holy exercises will find room in our hearts.

(4) What a man attentively thinks of at the time of prayer, dearest brethren, that he has set up as a kind of god in his heart, and he seems to keep it and worship it as his god and lord. This fact inspires in me unbearable pain and trembling, whenever a mind in the very act of prayer is carried away to various worldly occupations. The man seems to discuss one thing in words, but is clearly seen to be far away in thought, as though when we speak to God we should think of anything else except with our whole heart and soul and mind to ask for the forgiveness of our sins and His grace. For example, if the thought of the forum overtakes a man in prayer and he continues to think about it, he worships the forum. If there comes to him the thought of the house he is building or repairing and he keeps it before his eyes, he worships that. Or suppose a man thinks of his vineyards or garden or something else; whatever he holds before the eyes of his heart he will have as his god in prayer. I will not even mention evil or shameful or impure thoughts. So, I beg you to consider, dearly beloved, and see how harsh that captivity is which directs the whole attention of the mind to the earth or the walls of a house or stones while the tongue seems to be conversing with God. If it is shameful for things which we may lawfully think of or behold at another time to creep

into our prayer, how wrong do you suppose it will be to think in prayer about matters which even at other times are unlawfully considered? In other words, if when we are bowed in prayer we set before the eyes of our hearts avarice or hatred or anger or dissipation or adultery or other similar vices? Therefore, dearly beloved, let us beseech the Lord from the bottom of our hearts to deign to free us from this deception of the Devil and to grant us the forgiveness of our sins.

(5) Therefore, I exhort you again and again, dearly beloved, if you cannot entirely avoid this captivity of soul, at least let us with the Lord's help try as hard as we can to succumb to it only after some struggle, lest, perchance, while we think of something else through negligence when praying, as a result we find offense with God, from whom we might have obtained grace. Let us also pray, brethren, not only for ourselves but for all Christians everywhere; let us implore God's mercy upon our enemies as well as our friends. Moreover, as the blessed Apostle says: 'We do not know what we should pray for as we ought,'[3] so let us entreat this for ourselves and everybody else, that God may deign to grant what He knows is best for our soul. Above all, let us say the Lord's Prayer, brethren, for surely He will gladly hear the prayer which He Himself composed in His ineffable goodness. If under God's inspiration you willingly heed this as you usually do, and strive to fulfill it as far as God gives you the strength, you will cause us to rejoice, dearly beloved, and will prepare for yourselves a kingdom: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns.

3 Rom. 8.26.

Sermon 73

An Admonition to All the People, Encouraging Them to Remain Faithfully in Church until the Divine Mysteries Are Celebrated

(1) I beg and exhort you with paternal devotion, dearly beloved, that as often as Mass is celebrated, either on Sunday or other important holydays, no one should leave church until the divine mystery is completed. Although there are many people whose faith and piety give us reason to rejoice, there are still more who think less about the salvation of their souls. These latter leave church as soon as the divine lessons have been read; in fact, while the lessons are being read, some of them are so busy with idle and worldly gossip that they neither hear it themselves nor allow others to do so. We might blame such people less if they did not come to church, because they clearly offend God all the more in the very place where they might have merited forgiveness of their sins.

(2) Therefore I ask you, brethren, to hear the suggestion of our humility not only patiently, but even willingly. If you take careful notice you will realize that Mass is not over when the divine lessons are read in church, but when the gift-offering is made, when the Lord's Body and Blood are consecrated. By yourselves you can read in your own homes the lessons or prophecies or apostolic writings or the Gospels, or you can listen to others while they read them. However, you cannot hear or see the consecration of Christ's Body and Blood anywhere except in the house of God. Therefore, anyone who wants to offer the whole Mass with profit to his soul ought to remain in church, prostrate and with compunction of heart, until the Lord's Prayer is said and the blessing imparted to the people. When the majority of the people—in fact, what is worse, almost all of them—leave

church as soon as the lessons have been recited, to whom will the priest say: 'Lift up your hearts'?[1] Moreover, how can they reply that they have lifted them up when they go down into the streets both in body and in heart? Or how will they be able to shout with trembling and with joy: 'Holy, holy, holy, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'?[2] Again, when the Lord's Prayer is said, who will be able to exclaim with humility and truth: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors'?[3] Indeed, even those who remain in church utter the Lord's Prayer with their lips to their own judgment rather than as a remedy if they have not forgiven debts to their debtors and are shown to have failed to fulfill it in deed. Moreover, to no purpose do they say: 'Deliver us from evil,' when they themselves do not cease to return evil for evil. If, then, those who are in church are in danger if they refuse to fulfill what they promise, what are those to think whom either insatiable desire or worldly affection keeps so involved that it does not allow them to remain in church for the space of one hour? It is not enough for them that throughout the week they are continually occupied with their needs or, perhaps more truly, with their desires. Still, after an hour or two, in which they seem to be present in church more in body than in spirit, turning their backs on the sacrifices and God's priests, they return without delay to embrace worldly pleasure. These people do not know what they are looking for or what they are leaving. They follow darkness and desert the light; they embrace shadows and despise the truth. They lose the sweetness of Christ and seek the bitterness of the world; they love vanity and look for falsehood. Truly, one who is in a hurry to leave church does not know the good that is accomplished in the celebration of Mass.

(3) If a king or some influential person had invited

1 One of the prayers before the Preface of the Mass.
2 The opening words of the Canon of the Mass.
3 Matt. 6.12,13.

them to a repast, I wonder whether they would dare to depart before the entire meal was finished; even if no person detained them, their gluttony would. Why do we not leave the banquet of a man until it is over except that we want to fill our stomachs more than is probably necessary and fear to hurt a man? Why do we quickly leave a spiritual and divine banquet? I fear to mention it lest, perchance, some become angry, yet I will speak because of the imminent danger both to me and to you. We do this because we neither care for the soul's food, nor fear God, nor respect man. However, through God's mercy not all here present are guilty; many are found to remain in church with great devotion until the blessing is imparted to the people and to pray humbly, not only for themselves, but also for others. God, who has given them such devotion so that they remain in church, will also grant them a reward. On the other hand, those who are careless will be condemned in His just judgment. Therefore, brethren, admonish those who are unwilling to say the Lord's Prayer and receive the blessing. Do not cease to rebuke them, telling them and definitely threatening them that it does them no good to hear the divine lessons if they depart before the sacred mysteries are finished. However, we cannot and should not blame those who are occupied in works of public necessity and those who are prevented from remaining through some infirmity. But let them examine their conscience, as to whether necessity or their own will holds them back.

(4) Therefore, again and again I beg and beseech you, that every Sunday, and especially on the major feasts, that no one leave church until the divine mysteries are completed—with the exception, of course, of those we mentioned before who might be prevented by serious infirmity or public necessity from remaining any longer. I speak truly, brethren; it is shameless and excessively wicked for Christians not to have the reverence for the Lord's day which the Jews are seen to observe on the Sabbath. Since the latter unfortunate people

observe the Sabbath in such a way that they do not dare to do any secular work on it, how much more should those who 'were redeemed, not with gold or silver, but with the precious blood of Christ'[4] pay attention to their price and devote themselves to God on the day of His resurrection, thinking more diligently of the salvation of their souls? Finally, if throughout the Lord's day we neglect to engage in reading and prayer, we sin, and not lightly. How wrong it is if we do not have the patience to stay in church for the space of an hour or two while the divine mysteries are celebrated. What is worse, love for this world so permeates us that its fleeting shadows and the pleasure of worldly desires constantly draw us to vain and false joys which produce real grief.

(5) For this reason I repeatedly beg you: Let none of you leave church until the divine mysteries have been celebrated entirely. Remain in church in such a way that no one may desire to be busy with idle or worldly gossip. I advise you humbly and tell you what I must say and you should hear: The man who despises the herald will face the judge. However, if a man willingly listens and strives to fulfill what I have asked, I believe that out of God's mercy glorious rewards will be given to him both in this life and the next. On the other hand, whoever wishes to despise me will not be able to excuse himself before the tribunal of Christ by saying that he was not prohibited from evil or that he was not called by continual warnings to what is holy and pleasing to God. In God's mercy, however, we trust that you will not incur judgment for contempt, but that, instead, you will reach the kingdom through willing obedience, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

4 1 Peter 1.18.

Sermon 74

An Admonition to the People to Attend Mass to the End

(1) If you were willing to find out and carefully hear what grief and bitterness there is in my soul when I see you unwilling to stay for the entire Mass, dearly beloved, you might have pity on both yourselves and me. Surely, those who understand what is taking place in church when the divine mystery is being celebrated realize the evil they do who without great necessity depart from church when the Mass is not yet finished. Therefore, if you want to free me from tribulation of soul and to absolve yourselves from sin, do not despise my plea. Fear, rather, what the Lord has said about priests: 'He who hears you hears me; and he who rejects you rejects me.'[1] Whoever is neither afraid nor ashamed to leave the church quickly, although the Mass is not yet over, let him not doubt that he sins doubly, for he both leaves the sacred mystery and insults and saddens the priest who is solicitous for his welfare. If we humbly invited you to perform some difficult worldly task we are sure that your charity would obey us. However, when we call you, not to earthly, but to heavenly pursuits, not to temporal ones, but to those which will benefit your soul forever, we are not looking for any passing gain, but invite you to heavenly treasures. Consider, then, in what danger they remain who pretend to render obedience to us. Indeed, dearly beloved, when you leave church I do not grieve so much because you make me suffer any physical loss, but because I want you to be perfect I realize that you are offending God so grievously.

(2) Therefore, again and again I beg you that when

1 Luke 10.16.

you come to church, because we who are the Lord's least worthy representatives invite you to a banquet that is not earthly where human food is administered, but to a heavenly spiritual banquet where the bread of angels is set before you, do not reject or despise your Lord's banquet, so that He may not despise you in the blessedness of His kingdom. Indeed, you ought to fear that sentence in the Gospel where the Lord said that those who had been invited to the wedding feast and scorned to come were unworthy and He commanded others to be invited. It should not be considered with indifference, but should be feared, that those who were unwilling to come because of worldly preoccupations were judged unworthy by the very words of the Lord. Therefore, in order that this may not be said of us, also, let us, as I have already implored, have patience for the space of one or two hours until the food of souls is put on that spiritual table and the spiritual sacramental species are consecrated. Moreover, since when the prayers are finished the Lord's blessing is bestowed upon you, not by a man but through a man, receive the heavenly dew of divine blessing with a grateful and loving soul, prostrate body, and contrite heart, in order that according to the Lord's promise it may become in you 'A fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting.'[2]

(3) Various different occupations prevent all from remaining in church: bodily infirmity holds one, general needs another, their own whim binds still others and draws them away like captives. How many even now in the marketplaces or in the halls of the basilicas have time either for lawsuits or business! How many in the entrances of the basilicas or in the tribunals are occupied with gossip or idle conversation! No small number of clerics sometimes may be found among them! What kind of benefit can they derive from sacred Scripture when they do not even allow the sound of it to

2 John 4.14.

reach their ears? Rather is that saying fulfilled in them: 'Like the deaf asps that stop their ears: so that they do not hear the voice' of Scriptures 'charming her.'[3] Therefore do you upon whom God has deigned to bestow His fear and love, when you come to church with great compunction, frequently reproach those who are unwilling or, perchance, unable to come here. Warn them and give them salutary advice to fear what is written: 'The burdens of this world have made them miserable.'[4] Indeed, we do not say that they should not be anxious about food and clothing. But we do say this, that for the space of one or two hours, while the sacred lessons are read or the divine mysteries celebrated, they should not leave the church. Let them labor in behalf of their souls only as much as they strive in behalf of their bodies. Although they ought to provide for their souls much more than they do for their bodies—because what has been made according to the image of God is better than what was formed from the slime of the earth—this much we do advise at present, that they strive to provide equally for them what they need. Let them prepare for the body what is sufficient for the short time in this world, and for the soul what it needs forever in eternity.

(4) Therefore I beg you, dearly beloved, that what you gladly hear in this preaching under the Lord's inspiration, wherever you are, zealously carry all that you have heard to your neighbors or relatives who either cannot come to church with you or, what is worse, perhaps will not, as well as to those who, though they do come, leave quickly. Then, just as I will be guilty if I neglect to speak to you, so you, also, if you do not retain in your memory what you have heard in order to teach it to others, ought to fear that you will have to give an account for them. Therefore, with the Lord inspiring you, strive to fulfill what the Apostle says: 'If a person

3 Cf. Ps. 57.5,6.
4 The source for this quotation is unknown.

is caught doing something wrong, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in a spirit of meekness.'[5] The same Apostle also preaches not only to the clergy but to the laity and to women, saying: 'Reprove the irregular, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak.'[6] Provided that you are willing to rebuke one another in charity in case of sin, the Enemy will be able to take you by surprise only with difficulty or not at all. If he does take you by surprise, the evil which was done is easily amended and corrected. Then is fulfilled in you what was written: 'A brother who helps his brother will be exalted,'[7] and again: 'he who causes a sinner to be brought back from his misguided way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.'[8] With the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 75

In Praise of Chanting the Psalms, and on Perseverance in Doing So

(1) I cannot express in words the joy the Lord has granted me because of your holy and faithful devotion. For many years my mind had yearned for this, and I had longed with all the intensity of my heart for the good Lord to inspire you with this practice of chanting the psalms. Therefore, I bless God and thank Him as well as I can because He has deigned to fulfill my desire. Indeed, although I had wanted you to chant the psalms as they did in neighboring

5 Gal. 6.1.
6 1 Thess. 5.14.
7 Cf. Prov. 18.19.
8 James 5.20.

cities, God inspired your minds to do it even better, with the help of the Lord. What, then, should I do in the midst of this joy, except beg the Lord with all my might to deign to bestow a completion of this as He has granted the beginning. In His goodness may He grant happy perseverance to those who have adopted the holy practice of singing the psalms. Moreover, because not he who begins but 'He who has persevered will be saved,'[1] enkindle in yourselves by continual prayer and compunction of heart the fire of divine love as much as you can. Let not the flame of charity which has begun to burn devoutly in your hearts grow cold through some negligence.

(2) Above all, strive by holy thoughts, as well as by prayers, to fulfill in daily life what you chant orally; and may the Holy Spirit who speaks to you through your lips also deign to dwell in your hearts. It is truly good and pleasing enough to God when the tongue devoutly chants the psalms, but it will be still better if your life is in harmony with the words on your tongue. Our words and our lives should be in agreement. Let not our words bear testimony against our evil habits, and let not our tongue refute our lives. If one thing is uttered with our mouth and something else appears in our actions, what the tongue seems to build up our evil life immediately destroys. For your part, brethren, may the sense of the passage hold your attention as well as the pleasantness of the sound. Just as the sound of the words pleases your ears, so may the meaning of the selection become sweet to your heart, just as it is written: 'How sweet are thy words to my palate, O Lord!'[2] and further: 'The words of the Lord are more to be desired than gold and many precious stones: and sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.'[3] If, when a person chants the psalms, he only pays attention to

1 Matt. 10.22.
2 Ps. 118.103.
3 Ps. 18.11.

the sweetness of the sounds and the arrangement of the words, but does not heed what should be understood in them, his ears receive passing nourishment, but the word of God does not reach his heart. In a certain sense he chews on pure wax, but does not taste the sweetness of the honey at all.

(3) As I suggested above, brethren, heed especially the inner meaning of the psalms. When any one of you chants the line of the psalm, 'Let the proud be ashamed, because they have done unjustly towards me,'[4] he should try to avoid pride, in order to merit escaping eternal confusion. As we chant: 'Thou wilt destroy all them that are disloyal to thee,'[5] we should endeavor to avoid all evil concupiscence. When we sing: 'Blessed is the man that shall meditate on the law of the Lord day and night,'[6] let us reject useless occupations, stinging jests, idle and wicked conversations, as the poison of the Devil. Let us frequently read over and over again the divine lessons, or, if we cannot read them ourselves, let us often and eagerly listen to others read them. One of the psalms that recurs a number of times says: 'If I have rendered to them that repaid me evils, let me deservedly fall empty before my enemies. Let the enemy pursue my soul, and take it, and tread down my life on the earth, and bring down my glory to the dust.'[7] As often as we repeat these words, let us not seem to utter a dire curse against ourselves. Let us return evil for evil to no one, so that we may say with a clear conscience: 'Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[8] Now, since it would take too long to repeat everything that we have said about three or four sins, namely, pride, fornication, and hatred, let us feel the same about all the other vices. As often as sinners are condemned in the

4 Ps. 118.78.
5 Ps. 72.27.
6 Ps. 1.2.
7 Ps. 7.5,6.
8 Matt. 6.12.

psalms let us strive to avoid sin, so that we will not seem to be condemning ourselves with our own lips. Moreover, whenever the just, the merciful, the good, the chaste, or the humble are praised in the psalms, let us with God's help endeavor to be such. Then the blessing which is addressed to them will also be conferred on us through the divine mercy. Again and again I beg and beseech you: whenever you chant the psalms, consider more carefully what should be understood and practiced interiorly. Thus, while your tongue praises the Lord, the blessing of God will come to your souls: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

Sermon 76

An Admonition to Bend the Knee in Prayer and to Incline the Head at the Blessing

(1) I beg and admonish you with fatherly devotion, dearly beloved, that as often as prayer is said anyone who cannot genuflect because of some infirmity should at least not hesitate to bend his back or bow his head. What good does it do you to sing the psalms well if, when you stop singing, you refuse to get down on your knees before God? Let each one who has ceased chanting pray and entreat God with all humility, so that what he utters with the lips he may deserve with God's help to fulfill in deed. As singing the psalms, brethren, is like sowing a field, so praying is like one who sows burying and covering the ground again by cultivating it. If the one who sows a field only pretends to cover it by ploughing, the birds come and carry off everything that seemed to have been sown. Likewise, unless the one

who scatters the seeds of the word of God in his heart by chanting or reading afterwards stores them up in his heart by prayer and in a way buries them, the birds come—that is, the fleeting, useless, idle thoughts of this world—and carry off what had been sown in the heart. Therefore, whenever a person stops singing, let him not stop praying if he wants a harvest of divine mercy to grow in the field of his heart.

(2) Moreover, as often as you pray at the altar, brethren, I exhort you to bow your heads, lest, indeed, there be fulfilled in you, if you want to pray standing, what was written concerning the pharisee who prayed standing. Indeed, the publican was more pleasing to God as he bent down and accused himself of his sins than that pharisee who stood and extolled his own merits. Notice this, brethren, lest, perhaps, while some are praying others may be busy with idle gossip. Let them not wound themselves with the remedy or destroy themselves there where they might have been freed. Anyone who does this will render an evil account at the day of judgment, both for himself and for those he involves. This, too, I both advise and urge, brethren, that as often as you are told to bow down for the blessing it may not be a burden for you to incline your heads. Truly, you are not bowing to a man but to God.

(3) Although I rejoice greatly, dearly beloved, because of your fervent devotion, there are some, though few, who come late to the vigils and leave just as soon as the recitation of the word of God has begun. These people I beg you to admonish and by your holy and wholesome advice to arouse them to imitation of you. How long a time is it, my brethren, that we are seen to keep them occupied? You yourselves see that it is the length of scarcely half an hour. Moreover, in order that we may not detain the poor or craftsmen from their labors, whenever there is to be a sermon we have the fiftieth psalm said quickly so that the departure from church

may always take place at the usual time and not later. Now, I ask you, brethren, if in the midst of such great occupations and intolerable labors we do not mind hurrying through different volumes of Scripture and zealously providing spiritual remedies for you, why should it be annoying for you to receive it when we do not mind giving it? Since any sermon that is delivered works as a remedy for the obedient and unto judgment for the negligent, each one will do well willingly to receive the rain of the word of God in the field of his heart. If, perchance, a man should have pretended to receive the waters of salvation, he afterwards would have to seek for a drop of consolation in the midst of the flames of hell. I say that we ought to desire that rain, dearly beloved, of which Moses says: 'Let my speech be awaited as the rain.'[1] True it is, dearly beloved, that the soul which often refuses to hear the word of God is like the earthly harvest when it receives rain too late after the lapse of many months. Moreover, God's law is not only rain but light, according to what is written: 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet, O Lord.'[2] Therefore, whoever refuses to accept the light of God's word ought to fear that he may have to endure eternal darkness. However, we believe that through God's mercy even the negligent are to be aroused to the fervor of your faith by holy admonition and punishment that is pleasing to God. Thus may we be able to experience a double joy at your and their salvation: through the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns world without end. Amen.

1 Deut. 32.2.
2 Ps. 118.105.

Sermon 77

Another Admonition by This Same Ephrem, to Bend the Knee in Prayer, and on Idle Gossip

(1) I exhort and admonish you, dearly beloved, that whenever the priest prays at the altar or when the deacon intones the prayer in a loud voice, you devoutly bow your bodies as well as your hearts. I have carefully noted that when the deacon says the usual *flectamus genua,* most of the people frequently remain standing like straight columns. This is not at all proper or right for Christians who are praying in church, because the deacon does not pray for us but for you. Since those words are addressed to you in particular and most of all to the negligent, it is just for you to devoutly obey them. Let that prayer become a remedy for those who obey it, but evidence against those who do not, according to the words: 'Cursed be he that doth the work of God carelessly.'[1] We also ought to fear and perfectly accomplish what the Apostle said: 'Be assiduous in prayer, being wakeful therein,'[2] and 'pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks.'[3] Moreover, the Lord advises: 'Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation,'[4] and 'they must always pray and not lose heart.'[5] Therefore, if a man cannot bend his knees because of some infirmity, he should at least not be ashamed to bend his back and bow his head. He should recall that by this act of humility the publican who dared not lift his eyes to heaven obtained God's mercy, for with his head cast down he struck his breast and like a severe judge lashed his hidden

1 Jer. 48.10.
2 Col. 4.2.
3 1 Thess. 5.17,18.
4 Matt. 26.41.
5 Luke 18.1.

sins. Therefore, he deserved to hear the Lord deign to say concerning him: 'This publican went back to his home justified rather than that pharisee; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.'[6] This example of the pharisee should be considered with fear, lest, like the one who prayed standing, he should not deserve to be heard.

(2) Perhaps there are some who are unwilling to bend their knees, because they think they are guilty of no serious sins. Far be such a thought from the minds of Christians! The man who does not think he is sinning grievously sins all the more dangerously, for he risks defeat most of all when he does not feel that he is being attacked. But someone says: Who is there who does not think he is a sinner? Doubtless, one who does not prostrate himself and bow down in prayer to seek a remedy for his soul does not think he sins grievously. Perhaps someone else fears that he will harm his precious clothes. One who is afraid of staining his clothes in prayer should fear, instead, that his soul will remain defiled if he does not pray. Our soul should be worth much more than our tunic, so that it is greatly to be feared that the soul may be stained by many sins and negligences, while one's clothes are kept bright.

(3) If those who do not bend the knee or who refuse to bow their heads were asking a king or judge or a powerful person for something they need very badly, I would like to know whether they would beg for it carelessly and indifferently with head erect. When we ask an earthly man for something material we bow almost to the earth in humility, but when we beg God for the remission of our sins and eternal rest we do not deign even to bow our heads. This is not what we read of blessed Elias and Eliseus or the other holy people, of whom it is said that they frequently prostrated themselves on the ground to pray to God with all contrition. Of our Lord

6 Luke 18.14.

Himself the Gospel writes that, falling on the ground, He prayed in such a way that drops of blood issued from Him. What did Christ need, that He prayed like this? He needed nothing, but by His example He gave us the remedy of prayer. Mercy prays, while misery does not; Charity prays, but iniquity refuses to be humbled. The Physician prostrates Himself on the ground to pray, while the sick man does not bow down; Innocence prays, but wickedness does not. He 'Who did no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth,'[7] prays, while the guilty soul does not prostrate himself for his numerous sins. The Judge prays and wishes to be merciful, but the culprit does not pray that he may merit to receive forgiveness. The One who will judge prays, while the one who is to be judged refuses to do so. Provided that no infirmity hinders him, then, let no one be ashamed to prostrate himself on the ground and humble himself in prayer.

(4) We ought to go to church as to a living fountain or a spiritual river, brethren, so that we may receive the living water about which the Lord said: 'He who thirsts, let him come and drink. He who believes in me, from his belly shall flow rivers of living water,'[8] and 'he who drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but it shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up unto life everlasting.'[9] Therefore, the man who faithfully comes to church runs happily to that fountain. Just as a man cannot drink from an earthly fountain or material river if he refuses to bend down, so no one can draw living water from Christ, the living fountain or the river of the Holy Spirit, unless he is willing to bow down in humility. As it is written: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'[10]

(5) I exhort you in a similar manner, dearly beloved. Whenever the deacon proclaims that you should bow down

7 1 Peter 2.22.
8 Cf. John 7.37,38.
9 John 4.13,14.
10 James 4.6.

for the blessing, devoutly incline your bodies and your heads, because the benediction is not given to you by a man although through him. Do not notice whether the one who gives it is negligent, but look at God who sends it, for the blessing you receive is known to be a heavenly dew and rain. In the words of Moses: 'Let my speech be awaited as the rain, and my words as the dew.'[11] You know very well, brethren, that if rain falls on a mountain that is too perpendicular, it immediately runs down into the valley. Therefore, those who humbly bow down to receive the blessing act like valleys and receive the rain of divine benediction, exemplifying the words: 'Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.'[12] What is meant by 'Every valley shall be filled' except 'he who humbles himself shall be exalted'?[13] Furthermore, what does 'Every mountain and hill shall be brought low' mean unless 'he who exalts himself shall be humbled'?[14] Those who prefer to stand and talk idly in church rather than to chant the psalms refuse to bend the knee in prayer or bow their head for the blessing.

(6) Therefore I beg you, brethren, willingly receive our advice, or, rather, our pleas, as is your custom. When you come to church do only what should be done in church, namely, pray or chant the psalms; for by prayer you may be able to receive forgiveness of your sins, and by reciting the psalms you may be able to obtain spiritual joy. If a man is preoccupied with foolish and unsuitable conversation in church, he evidently offers or forces poison or a sword upon the rest of the people when he does not listen to the word of God himself or permit others to do so. On judgment day such people will have to render an account of their own destruction and that of others. Just as those who devoutly chant and humbly pray will receive glory for themselves and

11 Deut. 32.2.
12 Luke 3.5.
13 Luke 14.11.
14 *Ibid.*

all to whom they have given the example of a good life, so those who, on the contrary, have given an example of destruction instead of edification will have to suffer punishment for themselves and others. If a man neglects to chant, he should at least be quiet and observe silence, in order not to harm others by his bad example even if he does not edify himself. What the Lord said in the Gospel should inspire us with fear: 'Of every idle word men speak, they shall give account on the day of judgment.'[15] I ask you, brethren, if it is wrong for men to engage in idle conversation outside of church, what kind of a sin do you suppose it is to do so in church?

(7) The Devil, dearly beloved, usually attacks us most of all when he sees that we are armed against him with spiritual weapons. Because he cannot keep us from attending church physically, he tries to preoccupy us with useless thoughts in church and to engage us in idle conversation. By this vain and shallow, even biting, talk and through these base thoughts he can take from us the fruits of the divine lesson or the remedy of our prayer. Thus, we stand in church only in body, but are far from the sight of the divine Majesty with our heart and thoughts. Therefore, with God's help let us fight against his snares with all our might, according to the words of the blessed Apostle Peter: 'Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.'[16] And elsewhere we read: 'Be subject to God, but resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'[17] Therefore, I beg you, dearly beloved, let us fight as hard as we can with the Lord's help against that most harsh captivity of soul. Let us avoid, especially in church, idle gossip—which we know is blameworthy outside of church—as the Devil's poison. Moreover, as often as the deacon

15 Matt. 12.36.
16 1 Peter 5.8,9.
17 James 4.7.

announces that you should bend the knee in prayer or bow your heads for the blessing, do it devoutly and with true humility. By prayer your hearts will merit to be freed from all evil, and by receiving benediction they will be filled with spiritual gifts: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and might, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Sermon 78

An Admonition to Observe Silence in Church

(1) A few days ago I gave you some advice with paternal anxiety and devotion, because of those whose feet hurt them or those who suffer some physical ailment. In a way I asked that, when their sufferings are prolonged or, at least, when somewhat long lessons are read, those who cannot stand should sit down in humility and silence, and listen attentively to what is read. Now, however, some of our daughters think that all—or, surely, most of them—even those who are physically strong, should often do so. Indeed, when the word of God has begun to be recited, they want to lie down as they would in their beds. If only they would merely lie down and with thirsting hearts hear the word of God in silence! Then they would not be so greatly occupied with idle tales that they themselves do not hear, or allow others to hear, what is being preached. Therefore, I beg you, venerable daughters, and I exhort you with fatherly care that, whenever the lessons are read or the word of God is preached, no one lie down on the ground, unless, perchance, a very serious illness compels it. Even then no one should lie down, but sit up and listen attentively and with eager heart to the words that are preached.

(2) I ask, you, brothers and sisters—tell me: What seems greater to you, the word of God or the Body of Christ? If you will give a true reply, you surely must say that the former is no less than the latter. Therefore, with as great anxiety as we show when Christ's Body is ministered to us, lest nothing fall out of our hands onto the ground, with as great anxiety we should see to it that God's word which is dispensed to us may not perish from our hearts because we are thinking or talking about something else. The person who hears the word of God with inattention is surely no less guilty than one who allows Christ's Body to fall on the ground through his own carelessness.

(3) Still, I would like to know—if, at the hour when the word of God has begun to be preached, we were to give very precious jewels, earrings, or gold rings—whether our daughters would stand and take them. Doubtless, they would most eagerly take what was offered to them. However, because we cannot and should not offer bodily ornament, we are not willingly heard. Yet it is not just that we who administer spiritual riches should be judged useless. If anyone willingly hears the word of God, he should not doubt that he has received 'earrings' for his soul, transmitted from the land of paradise. If a man is encouraged to give something to the poor, whenever he extends his hands in almsgiving he receives bracelets given by Christ. Truly, as the pleasure-loving flesh is adorned for a short time with earthly ornaments so that it may please carnal eyes to its own ruin or that of others who are filled with lust, so a holy soul is adorned by divine words as with the spiritual and eternal pearls of good works. Thus happily adorned, it may attain to the company of its heavenly spouse and the nuptial banquet, and will not have said to it what is written in the Gospel:[1] 'Friend, how didst thou come in here without a wedding garment?' Then he will not be naked and despoiled of the ornaments of good

1 Matt. 22.12,13; 25.21.

works or deserve to hear: 'Bind his hands and feet and cast him forth into the darkness outside, where there will be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth.' Instead, because of its adornment of good works, that desirable word will be addressed to it: 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of thy master.'

(4) I beg you, daughters, listen carefully to the words which are spoken by us. If a mother wanted to adorn her daughter and the girl would look in scorn at the ornaments, often bend down and move restlessly from side to side so that her mother could not dress her as she wished, would she not be justly rebuked and slapped? Consider me the mother of your souls, who wants to adorn you in such a way that no spot or wrinkle may appear in you before the tribunal of the eternal Judge. Desiring to provide for your souls not only ornaments but also medicines, I want to sew up the tears, mend the rips, heal the wounds, wash away the spots, repair the losses, and adorn with spiritual pearls that which is sound. If I do not hesitate to give them, why should anyone receive them scornfully? Since earthly, temporal adornments of the body are procured dearly if no one is found to give them, how much more just is it, then, that you receive with perfect charity eternal ornaments for your souls, which are offered without any cost although we have acquired them with great labor? When we provide you with pearls from the land of paradise, we seek no other reward in this life except to see you listen patiently and willingly to the words that are addressed to you and, according to your strength, with God's help, fulfill them in your actions.

(5) Beloved brethren and venerable daughters, we are not saying these things because we believe that you do not accept the word of God willingly. Through the goodness of God our soul exults and rejoices over your submission more than can be imagined or thought. Still, because we want you to rise continually to better things, we presume to admonish

you with paternal solicitude even with regard to the things which you do perfectly. Moreover, since not all men or women would come to the vigils today, I beg you, sons and daughters, faithfully to report what has been said to you to those who were absent. Thus you may obtain a reward, not only for your own amendment, but for that of others as well.

Sermon 79

A Sermon on the Man Who Was Possessed by the Devil

(1) When Mass was being celebrated last Sunday, dearly beloved, that raving demoniac caused considerable fear among the people. It is certain, brethren, that scarcely anyone will be found who does not shudder and tremble with fear at sight of an unfortunate man thus tormented by the Devil. However, it would be incumbent upon piety and perfect charity to fear less and pray more for such a person. If you wish, beloved brethren, with God's help we can show you when you can be free from fear of a demoniac. You will never fear the Devil in the body of another if you do not possess him in your own soul. In fact, holy and perfect men not only should not fear those who are possessed by the Devil, but even should themselves be feared by the demoniacs or, rather, by the very demons, with great trembling. If we fear the Devil in the body of another so much, how much should we be afraid that we may nourish him in our hearts by bad actions? Every man, beloved brethren, feeds either Christ or the Devil at the banquet of his heart. If he is willing to observe justice, peace, chastity, mercy, and charity, he doubtless feeds and refreshes Christ within him, according to the words: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any

man opens the door to me, I will come in to him and will sup with him.'[1] Behold, it is proved to you how and with what kind of food a pious soul feeds and refreshes Christ. On the contrary, a man who wilfully loves pride, malice, envy, dissipation, and other similar evils should not doubt that he is invigorating the Devil and preparing desirable pleasures for him through such vices. Anyone can tell from his actions what kind of a guest he deserves to receive in his heart. It is certain that you will merit to have guests according to the nature of the feast you prepare. Many people dread the Devil in the body of another but neglect to fear him in their own heart. Everyone who loves pride is filled with the Devil, and if he willingly harbors envy along with the pride he is subject to two demons; further, if he commits adultery besides envy, he is possessed by three devils. If, in addition to these evils, a man wishes to love falsehood, he is subdued and overwhelmed by a whole legion of devils, for a man has as many devils as the number of vices he possesses. Finally, after the unclean spirit in the Gospel had departed and by God's grace the man had merited to be freed from the one demon of idolatry, because he refused to introduce virtues in place of his vices that unclean spirit returned and brought with him seven spirits more wicked than himself. Then were fulfilled the words: 'For by whatever a man is overcome, of this also he is the slave,'[2] and 'everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.'[3]

(2) Perhaps someone says: How can it happen that one who sins in his flesh by dissipation possesses the Devil in his soul? What we have said, dearly beloved, we will prove with evidence from sacred Scripture. Listen to the Scriptures saying that the proud man is filled with the Devil: 'Every man that exalteth his own heart is unclean in the sight of God,'[4] and

1 Apoc. 3.20.
2 2 Peter 2.19.
3 John 8.34.
4 Cf. Prov. 16.5.

'all pride is the beginning of falling off from God.'[5] What does it mean to fall off from God, except to depart from Him? Moreover, if a man is separated from God, he is necessarily united to the Devil. Furthermore, Scripture says that the envious man cannot be without a Devil: 'By the envy of the devil, death came into the world: and they follow him that are of his side.'[6] The canonical writings attest no less that the fornicator is also enslaved by the Devil, for the Prophet says: 'You have been deceived by the spirit of fornication.'[7] The fact that no liar can be without an evil spirit is evidenced by Scripture, too: 'Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie,'[8] and again: 'the mouth that belieth killeth the soul.'[9] In the Book of Kings we read that the evil spirit said to the Lord: 'I will deceive Achab. And the Lord said to him: By what means? And he answered: I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets. And the Lord said: Thou shalt deceive him, and shalt prevail.'[10] We should believe that the case is similar with all the other serious sins and offenses, because no one commits them without the Devil's prompting.

(3) Therefore, brethren, since we feel that we are subject to many sins and offenses, why are we to depair? Far be such a thought from Christian people! Indeed, we should not despair, but neither should we persevere in those sins with harmful assurance. The same One who said: 'When thou shalt be converted and groan aloud, thou shalt be saved,'[11] also said: 'delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day.'[12] A soothing poultice or clamp is best

5 Eccli. 10.14.
6 Wisd. 2.24,25.
7 Osee 4.12.
8 Ps. 5.7.
9 Wisd. 1.11.
10 3 Kings 22.21,22.
11 Ezech. 33.12.
12 Eccli. 5.8.

applied to wounds that are still fresh, for a wound which has not been allowed to become infected is quickly healed. Therefore, as soon as any one of us has contracted the wound of sin, he should have recourse to the remedies of repentance with all speed before the injury putrefies and acquires a bad odor from long-standing. If sin is allowed to get control, it is known to emit a most offensive stench to the saints and all who fear God. Therefore, with God's help let us work hard to correct or destroy all our sins, so that virtues may take the place of the vices. Let humility occupy the position which pride held; let almsgiving keep the one avarice was ravaging; let chastity cleanse and restore what dissipation was defiling. Let benevolence take possession of the man whom envy held down, and where deceit appeared let truth hold sway. If with Christ's help we endeavor to do this, brethren, not only will we not fear the demons in the bodies of others, but with God's grace we will also rout and dispel them far from our own hearts: with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom is honor and glory world without end. Amen.

Sermon 80

An Exhortation to the People to Make Greater Efforts to Pray in Church

(1) I exhort you, dearly beloved, as often as you come to church put idle conversation and worldly gossip far from you; moreover, hear the divine lessons with an eager and longing heart. Whoever neglects to pray or to sing when he comes to church, it would be better for such a man not to have come. Whoever does something that he should not have done in church, although he seems to be present in body, he is far away in spirit. What is worse, he does not sin alone or

in only one matter when he does not listen to the divine lessons himself and does not permit others to do so. Doubtless, he will have to suffer punishment in proportion to the number of people for whom he affords an occasion of sin. This I say to everyone, brethren, both men and women, religious and lay, those among the congregation and those at the altar. If anyone wants to say something to his friend, there is sufficient time for conversation after he has left church. Do not busy yourselves with foolish gossip; do not seek death in the house of life. Do not injure yourself in the very place where you ought to receive healing. Instead, prepare faithfully the receptacle of your heart for the living waters that flow into it, that is, for the Lord's lessons. Thus may be fulfilled in you what the Lord says: 'He who believes in me, from his belly shall flow rivers of living water.'[1]

(2) Brethren, let us now cry out in church that we may not cry out to no purpose in hell. Let us listen to the Prophet when he says: 'Sing praises to our God, sing ye.'[2] Whoever can sing let him sing; whoever cannot, let him interiorly thank God in his heart and rejoice with those who do sing. Moreover, let him observe silence in such a way that he may not hinder by his talking those who are singing. 'Cry, cease not,' says the Prophet, 'lift up thy voice like a trumpet.'[3] Let us, too, lift up our voices by singing or praying in church, so that our adversary, the Devil, may depart in confusion at the holy sound. If not in deed, then surely in thought or word the Devil usually creeps up to those who are silent or speak of idle, useless matters. When they are singing or praying he can in no way take advantage by his cunning of those whom he sees engaged mentally or vocally in God's praises.

(3) Therefore, dearly beloved, when we enter church we ought to fight for Christ rather than his adversary; we ought

1 Cf. John 7.38.
2 Ps. 46.7.
3 Isa. 58.1.

to serve God rather than the world. Whoever prays and sings faithfully in church is proved to offer to God an odor of sweetness, as it were, from the sacred thurible of the heart. On the other hand, anyone who delights in being engaged in common gossip is known to exhale an exceedingly foul odor. Truly, brethren, according to the words of the Gospel: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.'[4] If you listen carefully, you can learn from this what kind of character each one possesses. If Christ dwells in a heart, either devout prayer is formed in his breast or the words of the Psalmist are on his lips. However, if there is neither devout prayer in a heart nor the words of the Psalmist on his lips, not Christ, but the Adversary, abides in that heart. Then is fulfilled that saying of the Lord: 'How can you speak good things, when you are evil?'[5] This means: How can you speak with your lips a good thing that you do not possess in your heart? Just as in those other people who strive to sing and pray there is fulfilled the saying of our Lord and Saviour: 'The good man from the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good,'[6] therefore, according to the Apostle, 'Let us offer' to our Lord 'the fruit of lips praising his name.'[7] Let Him who dwells in our hearts speak also on our lips. Let our tongue render service to Him whom our soul serves, so that we may deserve to say with the Prophet: 'I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall be always in my mouth.'[8] May Christ the Lord in His goodness deign to fulfill this in us, to whom is honor and power world without end. Amen.

4 Matt. 12.34.
5 *Ibid.*
6 Luke 6.45.
7 Heb. 13.15.
8 Ps. 33.2.